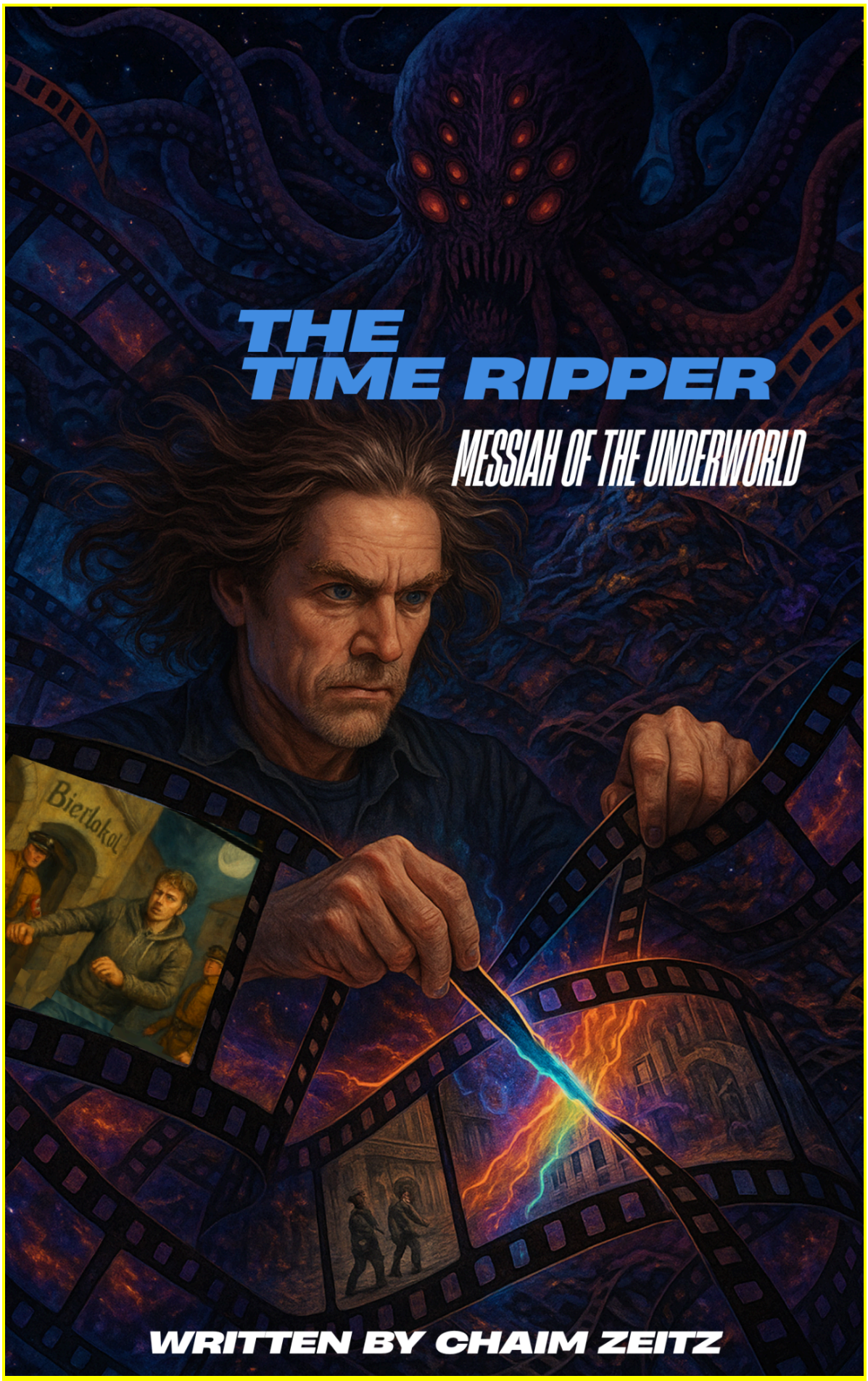
THE
TIME RIPPER
MESSIAH OF THE UNDERWORLD
Bierlokal
WRITTEN BY CHAIM ZEITZ

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Chapter 1 - The Great Unraveling

Above the city of Gamaz, the black sky shimmered with a fractal of spherical dark blue-gold clouds swirling like oceanic tides. This was not merely a meteorological anomaly; it was an ethereal canvas painted by the intricacies of a fourth-dimensional atmosphere. The Jinaan-Hagad, a meticulously engineered hybrid species, had once reveled in the wonders of their technological achievements, illuminating the vast cityscapes with bioluminescent structures that sang in harmony with the pulsating rhythm of the enormous planet of Feruz.

This mesmerizing world was a tapestry of vibrant hyper-spatial landscapes: transcrystallized forests that whispered angular secrets in the wind, hypercurvical plasmic rivers coursing through obtuse valleys, and mountains that pierced full rotational degrees through atmospheric layers into domains ruled by godly stars. As the hyperflux waterfalls flowed through unseen realms, its currents twisted and curled in mesmerizing patterns, effortlessly bypassing obstacles and swirling with a fluidity that defied the understanding of three-dimensional minds, each drop dancing freely in a complex interplay of molecular harmony influenced by the very fabric of higher spacetime.

The amalgamation of the Jinaan's ingenuity and the Hagad's innate adaptability had birthed a society where art, science, and consciousness intertwined seamlessly. Cities shifted and morphed, reflecting the collective dreams of their inhabitants, while technology wove itself into the fabric of daily life, augmenting perception in ways that were once thought impossible. Yet, beneath this brilliance lay a growing shadow. The clouds hung, a portent, an omen of turmoil that lingered far too long before vanishing without a trace. The Jinaan felt it resonate deep within their beings, a growing rift as the Hagad, the cephalopodic denizens of the deep void, began to stir with an insatiable hunger. The Hagad's once synergetic existence with the Jinaan was now marred by a reawakening that threatened the very foundation of their hybrid identity.

Generations of genetic splicing had blended their fates; it had been deemed an unbreakable bond. Nevertheless, The Great Unraveling revealed an astonishing truth: the Hagad were evolving beyond their shared existence, their bodies now capable of separating with an unsettling autonomy. The thought was once considered a fantasy, a concept lost in the murmurs of ancient lore, but the primal drive of hunger, relentless and consuming, reshaped their destiny.

The world of Feruz thrived, however, it harbored a complexity that few understood. Dominance belonged to the vibrant, self-sustaining communities, each thriving under their own laws while interactions dwindled to fleeting moments of influence. That is until the Hagad unleashed their ferocity, devouring all but one, the Jinaan.

~~
4,857 years earlier:

In the heart of Gamaz, Avakanazzar, the democratically elected overseer of Hagad counter-operations, orchestrated a communal gathering unlike any other. Luminescent orbs floated in the air, casting a gentle glow over the assembly, illuminating the faces of the Jinaan who had come to discuss their uncertain future. Their society flourished under the principles of debate and shared decision-making, where even the smallest voices held sway over monumental choices. Regardless, the atmosphere was charged with a perplexing tension.

A sophisticated AI facilitated the discourse, analyzing arguments with such precision that even the most complex nuances emerged clear as day. Today, the usual ebb and flow of debate felt stilted. Avakanazzar's suggestion to ration their dwindling food supplies struck a dissonant chord amidst the harmonious symphony of Jinaan values. The specter of moral erosion loomed heavy over their thoughts, a weight that felt foreign to a species that thrived on liberty and mutual respect.

In this crystalline city, where even the landscape shifted to reflect their collective will, the idea of rationing felt like an anchor pulling them into a darker abyss. The decision demanded a choice not just of survival but of identity. As twilight painted the horizon in shades of paradox, the Jinaan faced their greatest challenge yet,

the preservation of their existence amidst the looming threat of hunger, woven delicately into the fabric of their uncertain unity.

Avakanazzar

Our community's democracy and recognition of individual freedoms have made us who we are. It pains me to admit that we have entered a conflict that may question our values. We will have to make some hard choices that we have never faced before. The Hagad have entered our borders and destroyed 70% of our food supply.

The crowd erupted into chaos. Avakanazzar patiently waited for the collective to refocus on the matter.

Avakanazzar

Our best defense intelligence did not see this coming. The Hagad have already devoured the entire town of Shab. Unless we fight back, they will consume us all. Until we restabilize, we should ration the food supply and portion more for those who choose to fight.

Everyone expressed varying levels of concern. The chatter in the room hummed the tune of reality settling in. Avakanazzar looked around the arena to determine the atmospheric conditions. He felt the palpable fear intensify.

The airspace next to Avakanazzar fractured at points along a crooked line. The broken space then widened into a two-dimensional image of Welaweli, lead scientist of the Haiper organization, a publicly funded group dedicated to the future of the Jinaan society. Welaweli then deepened into a three-dimensional form. His final shape-shifting took place in the fourth dimension; however, since this story unfolds in three dimensions, the events have been modified for adequate digestion.

Welaweli

I am sorry for my late arrival.

Avakanazzar

What news have you brought us, Welaweli?

Welaweli

Based on the data amassed by the Tanaaim, we have discerned a consistent pattern indicating that the Hagad have evolved to metabolize nutrients with remarkable rapidity, resulting in an insatiable appetite. Their livestock farming technologies were insufficient to produce food at a rate commensurate with their demands, compelling them to extract resources from neighboring societies, as we are all too aware.

Each person's countenance illuminated with a mosaic of vibrant colors, a visual acknowledgment of the undeniable truth that, in hindsight, served as a foreshadowing of what was yet to come.

Welaweli

When the Hagad depleted the food reserves of the other communities, they resorted to devouring them out of history. Presently, we stand as the last remaining society, and the cycle of predation has commenced anew, as evidenced by the recent fates of Shab and, mere moments ago, Delu City.

Everyone chattered in worry.

Welaweli

We do have one solution that will work.

The crowd noise slowly faded.

Welaweli

As many here are aware, our genetic architecture parallels that of the Hagad, diverging only in expression while maintaining compatibility with the Jinaan gene pool. Our societies have a shared history, marked by mutual enrichment through advanced biotechnological collaboration. This synergistic endeavor utilizes cutting-edge genetic engineering techniques to temporarily merge our species, creating a hybrid that embodies the strengths of both. My organization advocates for a permanent integration with the Hagad, a strategy designed to curb their more primal instincts while simultaneously supplying the essential nutrients to satiate their biological needs.

The floor trembled beneath them, sending ripples through the air. Above, the transparent metal ceiling radiated, undulating in a cascade of vibrant tints before cracking open, revealing gaping voids. From these rifts, the Hagad emerged, like dark wraiths shattering through the fabric of reality.

Small metallic shards showered from the roof, clattering against the Jinaan's cephali. A wave of piercing cries rippled through the crowd as spectators gradually scattered from the vicinity. The children, ever the most vulnerable targets, were ensnared first in the Hagad's tentacular embrace, their innocence yielding to the fear of death. By the time the ninth child had been ravened, a contingent of the Jinaan army stormed onto the scene, engaging in a heated battle with the blood-dripping cephalopods. The Hagad soldiers, clad in their blue uniforms, were soon besmirched so thoroughly with vibrant free-flowing hypercurvical blood that they appeared to don tattered cloaks of darkness, a morbid echo of the daunting silence that led to the hunger-driven plague consuming all the other societies.

As the tides of conflict surged, the Jinaan forces gathered in formidable numbers, waging war upon the Hagad for days on end. Armed with the luxury of preparation, an intimate understanding of their terrain, and unparalleled technological prowess, the Jinaan found themselves nearly invulnerable. Their very environment had sculpted them through eons, rendering them resilient to the shade of death. As the surges of battle turned inexorably in their favor, the Hagad’s casualties swelled alarmingly each day, prompting the Jinaan to extend a semblance of mercy in the form of a treaty. In their hearts, the Jinaan harbored a deep-rooted desire for connection, recognizing that a fusion would yield advantages for both species. The Hagad, in need of sustenance, and the Jinaan, craving the time and space to innovate further, stood poised at the precipice of a monumental transformation.

Thus commenced an epoch lasting 4,857 years, during which both species wove their fates into a tapestry of shared knowledge, improving their technologies, health, and overall prosperity. Though the Hagad had not evolved the capacity for empathy, they cultivated an intellectual understanding of it, managing to temper their relentless hunger but never entirely suppressing it. This blindspot rendered the Jinaan oblivious to the true nature of their erstwhile foes, allowing a hybrid civilization to burgeon, enriched by newly entwined cultures, rituals, and

traditions. Names became intermingled, a homage to complex histories, while four gene pools coalesced to create a race capable of reprogramming interdimensional sequences, a feat that, augmented by their technology, enabled them to harness the energies of alternate universes.

This was the defining legacy of the Jinaan-Hagad, their mastery of interdimensional and temporal manipulation. For millennia, they were hailed across countless galaxies for their benevolent endeavors in restoring devastated worlds to splendor and averting cataclysmic fates. Yet, after 4,500 years from the epoch known as The Great Merging, a disquieting shift took root.

A splintering of subfamilies within the Hagerti-Gofge lineage brought forth the Gresheena-Grevolv family, who unlocked the uncanny ability to sever cognitive ties with their humanoid hosts, establishing a clandestine communion with other cephalopods endowed with similar capabilities. Initially, these mind-to-mind transmissions served as an exploration of their potential, a thrill of rebellion against the constraints of their existence. However, it soon spiraled into a lamentation of dissatisfaction, a gnawing hunger that was barely sated, a slight that hinted at the Jinaan's manipulative design to ensure their dominance.

Centuries waned, shadows of doubt creeping into the minds of the Hagad, until a series of devastating disease outbreaks catalyzed their swelling resolve to dissolve the intricate bonds that had long interlaced their destinies. The Hagad had perfected the art of emotional concealment, veiling their true sentiments from the Jinaan, who remained engrossed in their myriad distractions, blissfully unaware of the slow unraveling unfolding around them. Drifting into complacency, the Jinaan relinquished their once-vigilant guard, an oversight that would usher in their undoing.

When The Great Unraveling occurred, the Jinaan found themselves defenseless, having relied heavily on the once-subdued state of the Hagad to perpetuate their complacency. The balance of power shifted like a pendulum, and with the dissolution of the Hagad's submission, the Jinaan stood stripped of their ancestral might. Their arrogance, built upon centuries of assumed authority, became their undoing as the phantom of their worst fears materialized into grim reality.

The Hagad, shrouded in a veil of inscrutable intent, swiftly devoured the entire populace of Jinaan, their supremacy assured and unassailable. As the relentless march of time threatened to extinguish their nascent ambitions, the cephalopodic beings contrived a cunning stratagem, harnessing the formidable art of genetically synthesized technology to rend the fabric of time itself, leaping across fractaled timelines in a frenzied quest for sustenance that would not disturb the delicate threads of their own existence.

Since their technology could not pierce the fifth dimension, the ravenous creatures compressed their biographical makeup through the third-dimensional timescape, navigating to a distant generation within the Jinaan's fourth-dimensional past, long before The Great Merge. Bound by an ominous obligation for selectivity, they trod carefully, seeking not to taint the fragile bonds with their host families. However, time was an ever-encroaching hunter, ensnaring their opportunities to sate their voracious appetites within a singularity. As the Hagad stood at the precipice of temporal annihilation, they cast their gaze beyond, seeking other vessels of life to satiate their consuming hunger.

In their dark ambition, the Hagad constructed a gradient, a biversal bridge that would channel the famished beings into a three-dimensional realm, where, by a cruel twist of fate, dwelled a planet teeming with humanoids. Hence, they dispatched Zisser, once known as Zisser-Veyvo, the husband and quarter-brother to the supreme leader Oolra, formerly Oolra-Bounkray. He was sent forth as a scout, tasked with evaluating the cerebral prowess of the dominant species, desperate to avoid crossing paths with a people bearing too close a resemblance to the Jinaan.

Oolra surprised Zisser in person with the news of his new assignment. She had only a valra on, a thinly cloaked cloth that barely covered her geves. Oolra jumped on Zisser's head, gyrating all of her nanras on it until his subcutaneous antlers bulged out, fusing into all her geves.

Oolra

We’re edging too close to a time crunch.

Oolra’s geves flowered open as Zisser’s subcutaneous antlers dug deeper into them. Both vocally synchronizing, her norts wrapped around the bottom of his

subcutaneous antlers, tugging with intensifying pressure. Both her norts and geves glowed bright yellow and red as they pumped a generous amount of his life juice into her. She swung several tentacles, grabbing onto grounded items in the room, giving herself leverage over him. She violently forced Zisser to smack against a wall.

Oolra
Who owns you?

Zisser
You do.

Oolra, increasingly aggressive, whipped Zisser's head with another of her tentacles, branding a blackened-red bruise under his prominent eyes as a symbol of marked territory.

Oolra
Say it louder, fuckface!

Both panted heavier as Zisser exceedingly struggled to respond.

Zisser
You own me! You do!

Oolra
And who's going to be a good little boy and do what his master commands him?

Zisser
I am — I am!

Their vocalizing harmoniously oscillated as they climaxed together. Oolra then shrieked at the top of her lungs, finishing off his stored supply of lifejuice.

Oolra
Good, because you know what will happen to you if you fuck me over.

She jumped off of Zisser, leaving a trail of both their fluids behind her every step.

Oolra

I am sending you to our most promising planet to scout for food.

The hallway entrance evaporated as Oolra approached it.

Oolra

Report back when you arrive on the new planet.

After cleaning himself off, Zisser left his room and headed for the docking bay at the Quinzetti-Arfarf, a once beautiful epicenter for the advancement of Jinaan-Hagad technology, which, at this point in time, functions as the command center for the Hagad species and where Zisser will be flying out from. As he entered his space pod, he observed crews building new crafts below him. He placed himself in the correct position inside his ship. As the door shut behind him, the coordinates to the new planet lit up the airspace between him and the front panel of the vessel. Zisser checked the feeding tubes to ensure the maintenance staff had replenished them with Jinaan.

Zisser's forehead lit up green, and the space pod shot up and out of the roof exit. He entered his planet's atmosphere within a couple of seconds and reached the farthest part of their solar system within a minute after utilizing one of the hyper-tubes. His pod continued to accelerate past the cluster of comets in section 80480.44. Zisser entered the calculated scripts into the travel vessel’s navigation system to fluctuate through the gradient filters of fourth-dimensional spacetime. His computers granted him a function, and he ripped open a cosmic pocket.

Once inside, the vastness of space shifted into infinitely expanding colors looping behind Zisser. His pod quantifiably qualitatively spaghettified, and his fourth-dimensional cephalopodic body took the form of the space around him as it scriptingly squeezed its way through an ever-receding hole in the pocket he entered. Zisser extricated himself from the labyrinth of his fourth-dimensional body, expanding the intricate structures of his three-dimensional chromosomes suspended like genetic motifs on its two-dimensional planes. This maneuver was not merely a physical transition but a symbiotic dance with the mirrorverse that drew him inexorably through the ever-receding chasm of possibility. As he

traversed the nebulous event horizon separating dimensions, his form underwent a breathtaking metamorphosis, reconstituting into a familiar cephalopodic figure, now downgraded to a three-dimensional corporeal prisoner.

With a surge of determination, he propelled himself through the threshold between the event horizon and the newfound lower space, a realm brimming with untold wonders. Before him, nestled amidst the cosmic void, gleamed a radiant azure dot, a celestial beacon pulsing with promise. It corresponded perfectly with his meticulously charted coordinates, anchoring his journey through the abstract tapestry of existence.

As Zisser ventured forth, he glided past the effulgent globes of gas giants, their swirling atmospheres tinted in opalescent dyes, turquoises, chartreuses, and deep violets danced like vibrant auroras against the expansive canvas of the cosmos. Each planet, a majestic sentinel, emanated a chorus of colors, pitching rhythmic riddles of their own gravitational ballet, while the tales of lost worlds threaded through the starlit tapestry like silken threads of forgotten dreams.

Comets, like ethereal harbingers of fate, streaked by him in a celestial waltz, their icy tails radiating with lucid particles that caught the light of distant suns, casting a prism of brilliance across the void. Nebulae flared like cosmic blossoms, their velvety petals unfurling in an embrace of incandescent magentas and electric blues, infusing the inky dark with tales of stellar birth and death, while the echoes of supernovae pulsed through the ether like the heartbeat of the universe itself.

The distant glow of white dwarfs stood as steadfast beacons, their luminous reminders of the cycle of existence, flickering like candles in a cathedral of infinity. Zisser voyaged through this heavenly mosaic with a fluidic grace. The rich bounty of creation awaited him, a world teeming with life, the culmination of his voyage amidst the splendor of the cosmos.

Zisser

Zisser to command center. I have visuals of the assigned planet. My pod has recalibrated our time measurements based on the habitable satellite's rotation around its star. I'm sending the data to you now.

Command Center Receiver

Message received. We are sending the new time measurements to the council for further photonuclear implementation.

Zisser's pod glided through the expansive cosmic stretch, inexorably drawn toward the cerulean orb that shimmered like a siren’s call. As he ventured closer, his imagination unfurled, conjuring images of the new humanoids — flavors yet unknown, tantalizingly elusive. He pondered whether they bore a similar purple-silver hue to the Jinaan, their pointed ears crowned with wild tufts of crimson and fiery orange, bursting forth like the very flames of ambition unleashed upon the universe.

The notion of diversity then wove its tempting threads through his thoughts; perhaps their limbs were cloaked in emerald sheen, a vivid contrast to the hues of their elemental cousins. Or might they be a mirror to the Jinaan in form, but harbor secrets within, a quartet of hearts beating in a rhythm unknown to him, in lieu of the Jinaan's six?

He found himself captivated by musings of their passions. Did they revel in the intoxicating dance of intimacy as the Hagad did, their souls entwined beneath twinkling celestial canvases? These cerebral wonders provoked a delightful shiver along his spine, compelling him to surge forward toward the luminous blue beacon that beckoned him deeper into the enigmas of existence.

Zisser finally reached the shadowed embrace of the moon orbiting the newfound planet. His vessel, a sleek pod, detected the faint echoes of terrestrial interference that rippled through the cosmic silence. It soon became evident that the inhabitants of this world were strikingly dissimilar to the Jinaan. Their features, muted and monotonous, betrayed a fragility and a lack of intellect that would present a distinct advantage for the Hagad. Zisser mused that beauty in sustenance was inconsequential, for prey need only be soft and yielding under the weight of necessity.

With deliberate care, Zisser enshrouded his ship in a stealthy veil, rendering it invisible to the watchful eyes of Earth's dominion and their technological marvels. As he descended through the delicate curtain of the atmosphere, he failed to reckon with the avian tumult above. A throng of birds flew through the skies, their

cacophonous symphony creating a soundwave that disrupted the intricate calibrations of Zisser's pod. In a cataclysmic instant, he plummeted from the heavens, a stone cast from the crown of the world, crashing against the mountainside with a force that unleashed the very bones of the earth.

Amidst the chaos, Zisser extricated himself from the wreckage, however fate, ever capricious, conspired against him. A fresh avalanche of rubble tumbled down, sealing him beneath the weight of shattered stone, a tomb crafted by the very mountain he had collided with. Only the dimmest slivers of light seeped through the cracks, illuminating his confined world, a begrimed prison of fate's design.

In those contemplative moments, Zisser found himself adrift in the tide of his memories, a singular recollection rising to the surface, heavy with emotion. It was a shared experience with his host brother, Veyvo, a rare instance of profound empathy that transcended mere understanding. It was not just a cognitive exercise but an overwhelming physiological connection, imbuing him with an emotional resonance he had never before encountered. Veyvo became the architect of this awakening, his very essence providing Zisser with the keys to unlock a depth of feeling previously concealed from him, a genetic blueprint for compassion.

Yet they wandered through their lives in isolation, haunted by the uncertainty of whether others had ever glimpsed this ethereal phenomenon. They were solitary travelers on a road less taken, with Zisser sinking into a numbed existence, ultimately yielding himself as a pliant vessel to his sister, Oolra.

Veyvo, steadfast and unyielding, harbored hope for Zisser. Though his persuasive efforts were often muted, an unspoken understanding tethered them. His brother's evolution into true empathy was not just a personal journey, but a necessity for the survival of both their species. Observing the world around them, Veyvo recognized Zisser's singularity in this emotional landscape.

Even in the absence of physiological empathy during their youth, joy danced between them, a vivid flame igniting moments of discovery. Together, they traversed a mental expanse uncharted by their formal education, weaving ideas into an intricate tapestry that opened neural and genetic pathways previously

dormant. It was there, in this fertile soil of shared experience, that Veyvo nurtured the seed within Zisser, allowing him to feel the tremors of pain and anguish that shifted through the fabric of existence, a revelation that breathed life into his soul.

Zisser, for the first time, bore witness to the suffering of others, experiencing a pulse of life deeper than his own, a vibrant ache beyond the confines of his being. Despite this, shadows loomed on the horizon, for The Great Unraveling was set in motion, an ominous tide that Zisser knew he could not stem. To confide this truth to Veyvo felt futile; their words would be mere whispers against the tempest of the Hagad.

The prevailing belief among their kind was that through intermingling with the Jinaan, the Hagad would, over generations, evolve the capacity for physiological empathy, a gradual merging of minds into a unified whole. The Jinaan believed they stood on the precipice of this evolutionary leap, with hope kindling the promise of change. They yearned for an indication that it was time to lower their defenses, ultimately the scales remained tipped in favor of the Hagad, who mulled over their precarious position. With their future cast in uncertainty, fear crept in — the Jinaan, as they flourished, might find the Hagad obsolete, potentially sealing their extinction should change prove elusive.

Veyvo and Zisser intended to unveil Zisser's burgeoning empathetic journey, but the gears of The Great Unraveling were already turning. Oolra, his elder sister-wife, helmed the operation, her keen intellect sensing an undercurrent of difference within Zisser. Her cunning led her to manipulate the matrimony database, ensuring her union with Zisser-Veyvo. Bounkray, her host sister, remained oblivious to the machinations at play. Zisser, burdened by his perception of Oolra's formidable intellect, remained silent, convinced that her ruthless shrewd would turn any disclosure against him, ensnaring him in a web of her design.

Veyvo urged Zisser to summon the courage to confront their sister-wife. However, fear anchored him at the edge between the dark and the light, between a potentially promising peaceful coexistence and an endless growing void of death and destruction. The specter of Oolra loomed large in Zisser's mind; to speak out to the high council would unveil the Hagad's well-kept secret. He

suspected she would exploit the revelation with the deftness of a puppeteer, orchestrating a victory that could come at the cost of Zisser’s very life.

Fear turned into numbness. Numbness turned into submissiveness. Submissiveness turned into murdering his host brother and getting stuck in the mountain of a lower-dimensional planet.

His never-satiated feeling of hunger had limited his intellectual capabilities to the point that he felt nothing when he ate his brother alive. Veyvo begged Zisser every step of the way to find the pathway back to empathy. Unfortunately, Zisser's brain was a machine at that point. It only knew one thing: eat.

Oolra eventually lost interest in figuring out what was different about Zisser. The measurable change she saw in him appeared to vanish. Her motives slowly transitioned into utilizing him. She knew he was good at reconnaissance and had experience in the outer world, so she had him do the first reconnaissance mission to one of the more likely planets suitable for feeding.

Zisser pondered the possibility of success had he listened to his host brother, Veyvo. Their shared curiosity continued to connect them, enabling Veyvo to guide Zisser even after his passing. Together, their hybrid minds developed into a single entity, sustaining a bond that fueled Zisser's journey.

After ruminating on the haunting memory, Zisser attempted once more to crawl back to his ship in a futile effort to establish communication with the Hagad command center, but he found himself utterly immobilized. The grim reality settled upon him: he would not survive long enough to await the arrival of reinforcements. Days, perhaps even weeks, could pass in this planet's time before the Hagad even suspected anything amiss. In a twisted sense of fortune, he reasoned that his injuries might prove fatal before the gnawing hunger took him.

Hours dragged on, and though the grip of death had not yet claimed him, desperation clawed at Zisser as his hunger deepened. His suit had depleted its supply of Jinaan nutrients, leaving him without sustenance. In his growing desperation, he reassured himself that the tiny creatures scuttling about the cave were better than nothing; however, with each meager catch, he only found

himself more tormented by emptiness. Relinquishing that futile pursuit, he turned his senses outward, only to detect a new and tantalizing aroma wafting towards him. It carried the promise of a more intricate life form. Although still too distant to discern its shape, he recognized instinctively that it could provide him with the sustenance he so desperately craved, if only for a fleeting moment. He dared to hope that there would be more of these creatures approaching his direction, perhaps even stumbling through the debris that surrounded him.

He began to salivate through his rurnanuros and chegfe nor-nals, organs that, while akin to the human mouth, also performed a variety of additional functions. Zisser found himself unable to quell the flow of saliva. The tantalizing scent approached, drawing nearer with each moment. If it continued on its current path, it would undoubtedly misstep and plunge through a fragile point in the debris at any instant. As Zisser peered upward through the fissures in the rocks that encased the opening he had created, a sharp surge of pain coursed through his body, leaving him momentarily breathless.

Zisser

Nnnnnrrrrrrrraaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhh!

In the blink of an eye, additional antlers began to unfurl, gushing out more blood, mingling a final dance with his life juice. Zisser recognized this phenomenon from a past encounter; it signified that he had but a few fleeting days left to live.

Chapter 2 - Two Worlds

The foreign interdimensional scout known as Zisser, formerly Zisser-Veyvo, had been coursing out blood blended with what can only be translated in the human language of English as life juice. Life juice, while akin to sperm in its fundamental roles, diverges significantly in its function. Principal among these distinctions is the remarkable capacity of life juice to serve as a cohesive medium, enabling the suspension of interdimensional molecules within a quintessence of five dimensions. This intricate ballet allows for the harmonious synchronization of all realities residing within the confines of four dimensions, fostering a symbiotic relationship that enhances the Hagad's very fabric of existence.

This was critical in the advancement of their earlier technologies prior to The Great Merge. The Hagad had metamorphosed into beings perpetually ravenous, a relentless hunger gnawing at them almost immediately upon the completion of a meal. It was inevitable that they would cause the extinction and historical deletion of other life groups. The only way for them to survive after obliterating a species out of existence was to eat what came before their current meals. Advancing their spacetime technology with the Jinaan's interdimensional technology expanded their hunting grounds. The downside was that they couldn't fold their reality through higher-dimensional boundaries, only compress it along lower planes. That's why the Hagad chose Earth over another world within their own continuum.

Had it not been for the pressure of the rocks pressed against his body, Zisser would have had a quicker death. The subcutaneous antlers bulging out slowly for no sexual reason while spewing out blood and life juice is a process that occurs only when the Hagad body is ready to shut down. Zisser comes from a strong line of Jinaan-Hagad, which played a role in his prolonged ending. For thousands of years, their species advanced together through a hybrid evolutionary process with promising outcomes. However, for many reasons, the Hagad would have chosen suicide rather than continue an existence subordinate to the Jinaan's will. The Jinaan had good reason to be cautious, but it fed into the Hagad's undying hunger.

Like many other fallen societies, communication between the Jinaan and the Hagad broke down over time. Zisser's crucial changes could have prevented The Great Unraveling. Unfortunately, the years were not kind to Zisser-Veyvo, as Oolra forced marriage with them. The arrangement had political and personal consequences, which would have worked against Zisser-Veyvo had they spoken out. The dilemma caused Zisser to go into a perpetual emotional regression and have a colder relationship with his host brother. When Zisser killed Veyvo, he felt no remorse. Had empathy been completely removed from his code?

Perhaps the Cosmos is more consciously connected than we can imagine because on the next planet this story visits, there is a man named Kai Adleman, who we will soon discover is the key to his world's survival.

Kai, a figure of considerable height and modest fitness, possessed a beige complexion and disheveled dark brown hair, almost like a young Einstein. In 2024, he found himself entrenched as a resistance fighter, having forsaken his previous career as a Network Automation Engineer. Although he longed to assimilate into societal norms, a nagging unease gnawed at him, revealing an intrinsic conviction that something fundamental was wrong.

The geopolitical landscape had coalesced around Israel, now the epicenter of a world irrevocably fractured. The corporation he once served displayed a remarkable indifference toward dissenting views regarding the United States, making a recent corporate policy update particularly poignant for Kai. It announced the emergence of anti-Zionist sentiment within the workplace following Hamas's attack on October 7, 2023. Management mandated all employees sign the updated policy agreement form by the next business day, stipulating that failure to comply would result in termination for any criticism against a foreign nation that had once held great significance in Kai's life.

In less than two weeks, the hidden truth about the real American value system was exposed. There were no checks and balances on its abuse of power. Most government officials were behind Israel's final solution, and even if the judicial or legislative body wanted to prevent the ethnic cleansing, the executive branch was the architect of the money-making holocaust and controlled the world's strongest military in all of history. No one dared to stand up to Goliath, not even those whose sole job was to. Companies like the one Kai worked for were part of

the AIPAC cabal that glued the two countries together like atomic covalent bonds. Had he known his codes were being used to stage the narrative for a global takeover with Palestinians as the catalyst, he would have quit sooner.

In the calm period preceding the tumultuous events of October 7, 2023, Kai had been involved with a younger, beautiful Saudi defector named Sahab, who had fervently urged him to join her resistance group nestled in the forest's embrace. She had revealed what his work was about to unleash, and gave the chance to redeem himself. This proposition lingered in his thoughts, becoming increasingly salient following the brutal attack on Israel. As calamity struck, a tragic misunderstanding with his brother ensued, resulting in Kai being unfairly branded a Hamas supporter by his entire biological family and severed from any form of communication. The final shattering of his spirit came when his company wholeheartedly adopted the fabrications and justifications for the seventy-five-year-long genocide of the Palestinians, leaving him adrift in a sea of disillusionment.

Kai was at a crossroads when the company sent out the updated policy agreement form, and he could not bear to open it again for the rest of that day. He knew he could not sign it but had battled the world to get where he was. He didn't want to let it stress him out that night, so he headed to a friend's house party in Stony Brook, a grand estate that exuded both elegance and comfort. The sprawling mansion was surrounded by meticulously landscaped gardens, where radiant flowers bloomed in vibrant colors and lush greenery provided a serene backdrop.

Inside, the expansive open floor plan was adorned with modern art pieces that danced in the warm glow of ambient lighting. Plush sofas invited socialization while the subtle sounds of laughter and clinking glasses floated through the air. Despite the indulgence of the party, Kai found himself feeling restless. Seeking solace, he slipped out to the spacious, less-crowded backyard, a tranquil oasis that was more in tune with his spirit. Elegant outdoor furniture was arranged around a stylish fire pit, and soft string lights hung above, twinkling like stars themselves.

Kai reached for a joint rolled with his favorite strain, Golden Goat. As he lit it, the sweet, lemony aroma filled the cool night air, mingling with the floral notes

wafting from the nearby garden. With each inhalation, he felt the heavy weight of the day lift from his shoulders as the smoke curled into the air, dissipating under the vastness of the sky.

Looking up, he marveled at the vibrant tableau overhead, where twinkling stars emerged like brilliant diamonds against the dark velvet of the night. The constellations seemed to dance playfully among thin wisps of clouds slowly drifting by, casting a dreamlike quality over the scene. Lost in contemplation, Kai was abruptly pulled from his reverie when Sahab playfully snuck up behind him, jumping on his back and covering his eyes. A grin spread across his face as he recognized her familiar warmth.

He turned around and bent his knees so that she could perch on the flat top of the wooden fence, a perfect seat from which to admire the evening. She leaned in, and as their lips met in a soft kiss, the world around them faded into insignificance. The night air was filled with the intoxicating fragrance of the Cannabis, mingled with the earthiness of the backyard's foliage.

As the sun began to rise the following day, painting the sky in shades of pink and gold, Kai made a choice. He left everything behind and followed Sahab into the woods, stepping into a new life among a group of resistance fighters who coordinated with different organizations around the globe, united in their stand against the Zionist hubris.

In early July 2024, the resistance entrusted Kai with the responsibility of documenting the activities of various Wall Street executives and charting their daily trajectories. These assignments were relatively straightforward; however, one day, while Kai was engaged in his role, an unexpected setback occurred.

Following his fatal knockout of a self-proclaimed Zionist who had assaulted an eight-year-old boy, allegedly Palestinian, in the heart of Times Square, Kai found himself thrust into the spotlight of both news media and social discourse. The public opinion surrounding him was sharply divided; some labeled him a self-loathing adversary of his own Jewish heritage, while others exalted him as a hero. Regardless of the varying perceptions, the law was adamantly pursuing him. He could hardly set foot in a convenience store without encountering his visage plastered across walls and screens, a constant reminder of his notoriety.

The nationalist zealot that Kai smashed into the concrete jungle ground was an off-duty police officer, a deed comparable to provoking a hornet's nest, particularly in New York City. Engaging in such an act is tantamount to inviting the most extreme forms of chaos or reflects a profound ignorance of the repercussions. In Kai's defense, the officer was not in uniform. Nevertheless, Kai made his decision, and the law compelled him to confront the ramifications of his actions.

Kai made new friends while on the run. They told him about a hidden place in the mountains of Ouray, Colorado, on Bear Creek trail. They said to him that if he traveled up long enough, he would find a hidden cabin to stay in safely. At this point, this was his only real option left. At the last place he visited, the cops almost caught him. If it weren't for a supporter of his helping him escape, he would have been shot into scrambled eggs by the cops.

Kai was familiar with Murphy's law. He believed his life gave shape to the meaning of it. As an eight-year-old enslaved for a business called "Just For The Mitzvah" (Just For The Good Deed), Kai developed a basic sense of how the world works: if you can imagine it, it will happen. If not now, later. That seemed to be how reality worked. Given enough time, anything is possible.

So when the world broke in two, one made up of genocidal maniacs and the other empathetic humans, Kai chose the side of humanity. That is why he killed the cop. Because he saw his enslaved eight-year-old self in the eight-year-old alleged Palestinian boy, who the authority figure was beating up for the way he looked, spoke, and dressed.

Kai basked in the tranquil embrace of Colorado's majestic mountains, a sanctuary far removed from the tumult of the world. He had arrived in Ouray, a quaint hamlet of scarcely eight hundred souls, nestled within the cradle of towering, well-groomed peaks. Before him lay Main Street, which gracefully transformed into the legendary Million Dollar Highway, winding upwards like a silver serpent draped over the land, leading to the crown jewel of the town, Mount Abram, resplendent and regal.

The Bear Creek trail beckoned like a whisper, its allure closer to the noble Mount Abram than the serpentine roadway that awaited his ascent. With each determined step, Kai felt a sense of purpose beaming through him. The summit of Mount Abram stood as a steadfast beacon, a sentinel guiding him through the verdant valley. His newfound companions, with hearts as warm as the sunlit slopes, had instructed him to follow the course of Million Dollar Highway the moment he laid his eyes on that majestic peak. They assured him that Mount Abram was unmistakable, its silhouette striking against the cerulean sky, a testament to nature's grandeur and a promise of refuge awaiting him.

Mount Abram towered regally, its sharp, triangular profile piercing the vibrant shades of the southwestern Colorado sky. The mountain's summit was draped in a thick, crystalline blanket of snow, which sparkled like pearls as the sun began its descent. With each passing moment in October, the sunset unleashed a breathtaking spectacle across the rugged landscape, casting a warm golden light that ignited the towering red rock formations and lush pine forests.

The wildflowers that had once painted the meadows with a riot of color were now brushed with the subtle tones of late season, but their beauty lingered in the air, mingling with the crisp scent of fir and the sweet decay of fallen leaves. Pillars of deep orange and fiery red erupted on the horizons while tufts of clouds caught the fading light, drifting lazily as if time itself had slowed to savor the moment.

Kai stood in awe, his face illuminated by the soft glow of the sunset, a canvas of nature's artistry reflecting back at him. As the sky transformed into a tapestry of twilight, a shiver of concern washed over him. Shadows crept up the valley like silent specters, deepening the hues around him. He expressed his worry about the impending darkness and whether he would be able to navigate the winding road and subsequent trail to the cabin, the magic of the moment dimmed by the relentless advance of night.

A police siren pierced the stillness of the night, freezing Kai in his tracks as a dark SUV sped past, veering sharply onto a shadowy residential street. He exhaled slowly, each breath a challenge against the palpable tension that enveloped him. It was the only sign he needed: he could not linger. As he ascended the serpentine road, the sun surrendered entirely to the horizon, leaving behind a blanket of darkness.

The chilling air seeped into his bones, prompting him to hastily don his flannel shirt and heavy jacket over his thermal undershirt. Despite these layers, the frigid mountain air gnawed at him, prompting him to jog up the winding path in an effort to generate heat against the encroaching cold.

Two hours later, he arrived at the sloping bridge leading to Bear Creek trail, the moon casting an ethereal glow upon the rugged landscape. In the darkness, he discerned the formidable silhouette of the mountain incline, which provided an angelic archway for the road to pass beneath. After several futile attempts to locate the trailhead, Kai navigated through the carved-out tunnel that would grant him access. He finally succeeded and began to scale the rocky incline of Bear Creek trail. Upon reaching the crest of the bridge, he turned back to gaze upon the road from whence he came. The eerie silence hung heavily in the air, with no vehicles visible for miles. Instead, he could faintly glimpse the flickering lights of Ouray far below, nestled within the valley like a secret kept from the world.

Turning his gaze forward, he pressed on, the dirt path soon yielding to loose stones that crunched beneath his feet. He knelt, fingers brushing against a rock, its surface icy to the touch, a fitting precursor of his decision to pause. Turning back, Kai walked a minute down the trail, seeking a sanctuary amongst the shadows. There, illuminated only by the silvery glow of the full moon, he discovered a small, flat area of soil conducive for rest.

As the luminous stars twinkled like distant sentinels, Kai laid his head upon his backpack, swathed in an aluminum blanket that shimmered against the nocturnal backdrop. Within moments, exhaustion consumed him, dragging him into a restless slumber.

It had been nearly two days since he last surrendered to sleep. Memories of a past life unfurled. The last time he had endured such sleeplessness was alongside his brother at a reggae festival, a haunting echo of when familial bonds had not yet frayed. His relationship with his family had always borne the weight of tension; he was the sole witness willing to disclose the truth about the bruises inflicted on him by his biological mother, which led to their scattering into the system of foster care. The very act of truth-telling had branded him an outcast, intensifying their resentment when he alone was blessed with a loving adoptive

family. The tragic events of October 7th in Israel had merely provided them with a convenient excuse to fully sever ties, branding him a terrorist and a self-hating Jew. Yet, in the recesses of his heart, all Kai had ever yearned for was a respite from the relentless cycle of scripted conflict and despair.

Cast out from his family and society, Kai fought for his life, or at least a part of him was. A growing part of him was ready to quit. For now, he had made it to the end of the day.

The sun cast its initial rays over what Kai's map identified as Mount Hayden. It was the first item he extracted from his backpack upon waking. As he urinated, facing Mount Hayden, he held the map in both hands, just high enough to avoid contamination but low enough not to obstruct his view of the mountain. He identified his position on the map and pointed to another area along the trail that offered a view of Mount Hayden. The measurements indicated it would take approximately nine hours to reach that spot on the trail where Kai hoped to find the abandoned cabin.

For well-considered reasons, the architects of the secluded shack concealed it from the well-trodden hiking path. Nonetheless, one discernible detail about its whereabouts is that if Kai were to face away from Mount Hayden while standing upon the final peak of that area, the cabin would lie a mere few hundred feet ahead, nestled among the trees. To reach the hidden sanctuary, Kai would need to navigate the uphill terrain, a feat entirely possible with a discerning eye and a tenacious spirit.

As Kai journeyed toward his new abode, he encountered his first formidable obstacle about seven hours into his trek: a hill strewn with imposing, jagged rocks cascading off the precipice of the mountain. With no option other than to divert from the trail, he steeled his resolve and pressed on.

With deliberate care, Kai removed his flannel shirt, stowing it away in his backpack. This left him clad only in a short-sleeved t-shirt emblazoned with the whimsical words "The Rabbit Hole Express," complemented by rugged jeans. He leaped gracefully, seizing a low-hanging tree branch, his hands gripping the bark as he swung his body over a fallen timber.

He propelled himself upward onto a substantial stationary rock that perched perilously on the slope, just enough to enable his foot to find purchase on the edge of a pile of boulders. Once equilibrium was regained, he shifted his weight and deftly maneuvered toward another formidable hill of stones, the front of his body colliding with the side of the rocky mound.

With determination, Kai ascended the heap, finally arriving at a vantage point where he could stand comfortably. He advanced up the stony slope, stretching his left leg in an effort to vault onto a medium-sized boulder, burdened beneath the weight of its colossal companions. Distribution of his weight proved precarious, and the boulder tipped ominously beneath him. Suddenly, a cascade of monstrous rocks above him dislodged, raining down with unmerciful ferocity.

Kai plunged to the unforgiving terrain as larger-than-life projectiles crashed mere feet away, sending tremors through the earth. The ground quaked, dislodging still more boulders from their perches, which clattered ominously around him, the atmosphere thick with dust and danger. Adrenaline surged as he fought to regain his footing, the ground beneath him continuing to tremble in response to the falling giants. Desperately, he scanned his surroundings for a location to leap to safety, his heart hammering loudly in his chest.

His actions were not quick enough, and the unstable ground below him collapsed. He fell into a cave and landed on a pile of rocky debris. Luckily, the fall didn't kill him, however, the distance imprisoned him inside. Kai yelled in pain as he looked down at his dislocated right shoulder. He attempted to stand up but could not due to the instability of the rocks on which he was lying. Kai looked at the rocky slope and searched for a safe way off the heap, sliding down until he met the leverage required for repositioning.

He propped himself up, navigating the jagged stones like a mariner caught in a tempest. With shadows cloaking the landscape, Kai reached a precarious section that compelled him to rise, a feat requiring every ounce of strength he could muster against the insistent throb of his injury. The rocky terrain loomed ahead, a foreboding challenge bathed in gloom.

As he braved the ascent onto the nearest boulder, an agonizing jolt surged through him, an echo of pain that clawed at the edges of his resolve. A primal

howl escaped his lips, reverberating through the somber silence of the surrounding crater. Undeterred, he summoned a fierce determination, forcing his battered body to rise once more.

With sweat lining his brow, he stepped cautiously onto the weathered stone, the grit beneath his feet shifting like the fleeting grip of sanity. The subsequent boulder yielded under his weight, shifting menacingly, as if the very earth conspired to cast him back into the depths from which he had struggled to escape. Shadows danced around him, rumoring riddles of despair as he teetered precariously on the brink of both triumph and catastrophe.

With swift urgency, Kai arched his back leg over the perilous descent of the boulder that threatened to obliterate the craggy outcrop beneath him. As his forward foot found refuge on the next jagged rock, he anchored himself against the encroaching danger, feeling the tremors of the earth reverberate through his bones. The air grew heavy with dust and foreboding as Kai instinctively propelled himself toward another refuge, all the while casting a fleeting glance at the colossal stone behind him, poised to crash down like a malevolent apparition. Just in the nick of time, he leaped to the next rugged surface, adrenaline coursing through him as the ground below quaked threateningly, a grim reminder of nature’s untamed wrath. Kai shouted in pain as his dislocated shoulder barely followed him for the jump. He stopped for a couple of minutes to recollect himself mentally.

Kai traversed the labyrinthine pile of jagged rocks, selecting the most forgiving path to descend. Each careful step brought him closer to the cave's shadowy depths, a mere twenty paces from the floor where darkness reigned. Suddenly, a sinuous yellow tentacle erupted from the craggy mass, lancing through the air with a predatory grace. Instinctively, Kai veered left, evading its relentless advance as he skillfully maneuvered down another stone.

Just as his heart began to steady, another tentacle emerged from the void, suspended like a sinister specter in the gloom. It arched intimidatingly toward him, its surface glistening, as Kai narrowly dodged its lunging strike. Finally reaching the cave floor, he turned to confront the ominous rock formation behind him, bracing himself as the air grew thick with an unsettling tension, a dark pledge whispering from the palls of the pit.

Kai

What the fuck was that?

Kai turned his gaze toward the right side of the heap and beheld a sight that resembled the grotesque visage of an octopus, its bulbous head protruding alarmingly. In that instant, the dreadful realization of his predicament washed over him. His eyes flared wide with terror, and his jaw slackened in disbelief. A low whimper escaped Kai's lips as he instinctively retreated, his back meeting the unforgiving wall behind him.

Desperate to distance himself from the alien presence, Kai scanned the confines of the cave, ultimately settling into a corner, his fixation unwavering upon the creature that had so nearly claimed his life. Time seemed to stretch endlessly as he remained in that solitary position, hours passing in silent dread. With each subtle movement of the cephalopod, a fresh wave of apprehension coursed through Kai. Yet, amid the paralysis of fear, he fought to retrieve a protein bar from his backpack. With painstaking deliberation, he extracted it and, as he tore it open, the alien unleashed a roar that reverberated through the cavern, shattering the tense stillness.

Kai

Oh, I'm sorry, are you hungry?

Kai cast a scathing, tormented glare at the alien before him, its forehead flickering with a variegated pattern of colors. With a grim determination, he raised his protein bar towards his lips using his functional arm. However, the relentless agony radiating from Kai's injured arm became an insurmountable barrier, rendering the simple act of eating a formidable challenge. Just as he was poised to discard the bar onto the cold, unyielding ground, he hesitated, an internal battle raging within him. With a deep, steadying breath, Kai surrendered to the agony and forced the bar into his mouth, the gritty texture contrasting sharply with the overwhelming darkness that surrounded him. The desolation amplified his struggle, each chew echoing the soul-stirring reminder of his plight.

Kai

(Chewing his protein bar)
Well, you can suck my dick because you ain't getting anything today.

Kai attempted to take another bite of his protein bar, but the jolt of pain that surged down his elongated arm shocked his system as if he had received 600 joules of electricity to the heart, allowing gravity to capitalize on the free dinner falling from his grasp. As soon as he found himself again, Kai looked up at the hole above them. It was getting dark. His mind began racing for a way out of there. Kai knew he only had enough food to last for another week if he rationed adequately. That fact meant his time was limited. Kai attempted to stand up to find a way out of the cave.

As he pushed his way up with his working arm, Kai looked down at the ground with a blank stare. He stayed frozen for about fifteen seconds before the weight of his elbow loosened, falling butt-first to the ground. His face expressed defeat. He looked over at his backpack for a quick moment before reaching for it and grabbing the audio recorder that he had stolen when he was quarreling with suicidal thoughts a few days prior. He turned it on and pressed the record button.

Kai

I tried—I really did try and stay alive, but this is where it ends for me.

Kai shut his eyes, striving to retreat from the onslaught of overstimulation that besieged his senses and the tumultuous ache of his thoughts.

Kai

My name is Kai Adleman, and I am a fugitive. I'm probably going to die down here in this cave, so I might as well open up about everything. If I'm found, then you probably also discovered the monster lying under the rubble. Clearly, I fell down the wrong rabbit hole.

He breathed in deeply, held it for a few seconds, and then slowly released the weight of the world.

Kai

Not long before I killed a cop, I joined a resistance group fighting against the tentacles of Zionism. I grew up as a religious Jew who was programmed into believing that I was part of a group superior to everyone else and that I was chosen to be a master over the rest of the human species. My father was a leader in a terrorist organization known as The Jewish Defense League, or what I like to call the Jewish Offense League.

Kai allowed a fleeting smile to dance across his lips before it vanished as quickly as it had appeared.

Kai

Anyway, after my mother gave me two black and blue eyes, the state took my siblings and me out of our home and placed us into many foster care families, each one being worse than the ones before. The final foster home enslaved me for a business called "Just For The Mitzvah," ironically translating to "Just For The Good Deed." I built wooden charity boxes for my foster mother, who starved me down to forty-five pounds and abused me sexually, emotionally, and physically.

He fluttered his eyes open and lingered in stillness for a moment.

Kai

My brother and sisters were also abused but had much milder treatment in comparison. It was much more noticeable that even the state began to gain suspicions. So much so that they took me out of that family and left my siblings behind. They stayed another year before the state took them out also.

He cast his gaze at the shoes gifted to him by his adoptive parents for his birthday two years prior.

Kai

I was the only one to land up with good parents. My sister Talia, who is older than me but younger than my other sister Dev, moved back in with the family that owned and ran the "Just For The Mitzvah" business after jumping around different foster homes for a while. They even adopted her. She ended up running away a few years later at the age of seventeen with the help of my adoptive parents while her adoptive family was away on a family vacation without her. She

stayed with us for a week before flying to New York to live with our biological grandma. Her adoptive family never reported her missing to the authorities.

He leaned back against the cave wall as if to create space for the next series of words to unfold.

Kai

What ended up happening is that once Talia moved in with my grandmother, my other sister Dev followed her there a few months later. That created a special bond between them. They felt safer together. After a year, Dev wanted to be in a more religious environment, and that's when she moved to Georgia to live with our younger brother, Sol. After six months, Sol's adoptive father raped Dev half to death. She moved to Israel right after that and got married. My brother stayed with his adoptive father even after his adoptive mother left, too.

Kai sighed as he closed his eyes again.

Kai

It wasn't until my brother got the living shit kicked out of him that he decided to leave at the age of seventeen and join the Israeli army at age eighteen.

He reopened them.

Kai

Sol and Dev also formed a strong bond. I always yearned for that connection my siblings shared, yet all I ever got back was resentment and misjudgments. These led to years of false programming, which led to the false image of a monster they painted me as. But then I did become a monster when I killed that cop. That's how I got stuck down here.

Kai inclined his head in silent affirmation to his own thoughts.

Kai

A part of me feels bad for doing it, but the other part of me knows I did the right thing by saving that little boy's life, even if it turned me into a monster. Well,

anyway, I think I'm ready to cave in and give up. If someone finds this, please tell my siblings, Talia Rayburn, Dev Stein, and Sol Rubin, that all I ever wanted was to have a relationship with them and that everything I did was to fight for that. It may not have been apparent, but it is the truth. Time was never on my side.

A tear ran down Kai's cheek.

Kai

Every opportunity throughout our lives to bond had been foiled by bad timing. The solidifying event was my sister Dev's wedding. A war in Israel just broke out days before, and my adoptive parents did not think it was safe for me to go to her wedding even though my other siblings' caregivers allowed them to. They survived, but clearly, my adoptive parents cared for my well-being more than their guardians did for theirs. Either way, that was another special bond I missed out on.

Kai's eyes widened as if rewinding time.

Kai

Please leave out that last part about my parents caring more for me than their caretakers did for them. They already think I'm the devil. I just want them to know how much I loved them even though it never worked out between us.

He cast a contemplative glance at his backpack, silently acquiescing to a grim concord within himself.

Kai

I have enough food and water to last me four to five days. If I'm lucky and drink my urine, I might last a whole week. Maybe if God brings Channukah in October, eight days, but what would one more day really be worth? More agony.

Kai gazed up at the alien, who appeared to be listening with rapt attention. Its head pulsed with colors that were entirely foreign to Kai's experience.

Kai

The pain in my arm is intensifying. Some areas have already become entirely numb, and if I don't get treatment in another couple of hours, I may have to rip

my arm off or, better yet, let the octopus alien eat me. Tissue necrosis is bound to set in if it hasn't already. I really am fucked. If I'm found after treatment, it's off to death row for me.

With a heavy heart, he pressed the stop record button, deactivating the device before setting it aside. Wincing from pain, he managed to rise to his feet, cradling his injured arm against his abdomen as he slowly traversed the rocky terrain. With great effort, Kai ascended several boulders, his body protesting with each movement, until he stood mere feet from Zisser's imposing visage.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
Are you able to understand me?

Kai recoiled in terror, a cry of anguish escaping his lips as he frantically scanned his surroundings.

Kai
Who said that? Am I hearing things in my head?

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
My name is Zisser. I have received enough input to communicate through the mind waves I found in you. I know you are afraid of me, and you should be. However, I am not like the others who are coming. Not completely. At least not anymore. The feeling of empathy has resurfaced in me, something I have not felt in ages. Something that only I in my species had developed. I feel your pain, living being. And that is why I need your help in killing me.

Kai expressed a clear, baffled look at Zisser.

Kai
Kill you? I want you to kill me! That is why I walked all the way over here. So I can be your dinner.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
That is very kind of you, but if I eat you, I'm still going to die soon. If I don't report back to my command center in three days of your planet's calculated orbit, they will send more ships to find me and finish the job. Your planet is the perfect place for them to feast upon. Your species is weak and stupid, an advantage we didn't have on our planet with the Jinaan. However, like the Jinaan, you have developed physiological empathy.

Kai
Who are the Jinaan?

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
They were a highly intelligent human-like species on our planet that we devoured. Your planet is next, and it will be infinitely worse because we have no shared history with you. This means that as soon as we finish eating everyone on your planet, we will go back in time to consume more of you. The cycle will continue until no history of your species is left, not even a memory.

Kai
Yeah? Well, maybe the planet would be better off without our species anyway. Perhaps you can stop at the Neanderthals? They seemed to have a more promising future than us until we fucked them out of existence.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
I have seen the potential of your species through you. If guided correctly, they can be what the Jinaan-Hagad failed to be. It is my dying wish that you see to it a vibrant future for your kind. Your people can become something more than what nature wrote out for them.

Kai
Why do you care so much if my people live?

Chapter 3 - The White Space

One of Zisser's waning peripherals writhed wistfully, clawing its way toward Kai like a snake emerging from the depths of a sunless abyss. As dread grasped at his chest, Kai stifled a cry as the appendage relentlessly coiled around his leg with an unsettling grace, slithering upward, its cold touch then gliding beneath his shirt, creeping toward his throat. With a benevolent flutter, Zisser tapped his tentacle against Kai's forehead, unleashing a brilliance that enveloped both in a radiant flash. The world around them dissolved into an endless expanse of blinding white, the only distinguishable objects being Kai and Zisser.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
I traveled through an interdimensional gradient to reach your planet. While we share similar spatial directions, my kind exists in extra continua that your mind cannot fully fathom. For this reason, I can only project my story in three of them within this dimensionless point that I can only translate in your language as the White Space.

Kai
How is it dimensionless if it's a space?

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
The space is an illusion fitted for your three-dimensional mind to mold into.

The visual details of Gamaz enveloped the White Space, an unfamiliar sight for Kai. He observed the clouds, distinct from those on Earth, and realized he was gazing at a city. The air filled with the sounds of wailing voices. Kai squinted his eyes as if he noticed something peculiar in the distance. He saw large swaths of Hagad crunching on Jinaan while others ripped heads off by tentacular force, sucking the neck-holes for the savory meat inside. He witnessed some tearing their victims in half, slurping on the dripping blood before chomping on them, and even more eating Jinaan whole.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
We weren't always like this. When our species merged with the Jinaan, we lived together peacefully.

Kai was instantly implanted within the city, standing on what looked like a digitized road drenched in Jinaan blood.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
Our hunger had hijacked our higher intellectual faculties, and every move we made was calculated to return to our old ways. It wasn't until it was too late that the Jinaan realized a genetic divergence had occurred.

Before Kai could even register the transient moment, a storm of cephalopodic aliens enveloped him and Zisser. The sheer volume of these aberrant beings rendered it as though they were adrift in a murky sea of torso-less, squirming, multi-tentacled monstrosities, their polychromatic skin glistening beneath a dreadful pallor. A sudden flash of radiance pierced the oppressive gloom, and in that heartbeat, Kai found himself thrust into a time cauldron, propelled 4,857 years into the past. He found himself amidst the austere surroundings of an arena, a somber amphitheater resonating with the hushed whispers of the Jinaan community, whose assembly altered the destiny of Feruz.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
Our fate was sidetracked by events that took place thousands of years ago.

Avakanazzar

Our community's democracy and recognition of individual freedoms have made us who we are. It pains me to admit that we have entered a conflict that may question our values. We will have to make some hard choices that we have never faced before. The Hagad have entered our borders and destroyed 70% of our food supply.

The crowd erupted into chaos. Kai turned his head to analyze the people's reactions. He then quickly turned his head back to Avakanazzar, who patiently waited for the collective to refocus on the matter.

Avakanazzar

Our best defense intelligence did not see this coming. The Hagad have already devoured the entire town of Shab. Unless we fight back, they will consume us all. Until we restabilize, we should ration the food supply and portion more for those who choose to fight.

Kai turned his head back to the crowd, who expressed varying levels of concern. The chatter in the room hummed the tune of reality settling in. Then, the airspace next to Avakanazzar fractured at points along a crooked line, catching Kai's attention. The broken space then widened into a two-dimensional image of Welaweli. He then deepened into a three-dimensional form. The final shape-shifting took place in the fourth dimension. Kai could not see the final formation because of his three-dimensional mind. Zisser looked over at Kai.

Zisser

(Mind-to-mind transmission)

That is Welaweli entering the arena, the lead scientist of the Haiper organization, a publicly funded group that was *dedicated to the future of the Jinaan society.*

Welaweli

I am sorry for my late arrival.

Avakanazzar

What news have you brought us, Welaweli?

Welaweli

Based on the data amassed by the Tanaaim, we have discerned a consistent pattern indicating that the Hagad have evolved to metabolize nutrients with remarkable rapidity, resulting in an insatiable appetite. Their livestock farming technologies were insufficient to produce food at a rate commensurate with their demands, compelling them to extract resources from neighboring societies, as we are all too aware.

Each person's countenance illuminated with their mosaic of vibrant colors, their visual acknowledgment of the undeniable truth.

Welaweli

When the Hagad depleted the food reserves of the other communities, they resorted to devouring them out of history. Presently, we stand as the last remaining society, and the cycle of predation has commenced anew, as evidenced by the recent fates of Shab and, mere moments ago, Delu City.

Everyone chattered in worry. Kai's eyes suddenly revealed the weight of what he had just heard. He pointed his finger at Zisser.

Kai

Are you telling me that this is what my planet has to look forward to?

Zisser

(Mind-to-mind transmission)

Yes, unless you fight back. I realize the challenge you face if you take on this responsibility. I also feel the pain your people have put you through and the desire to give up on them. Yet, your words reveal that you still have love for them. It's the feeling that I had for my host brother years before I murdered him. For this reason, you must gather the courage to save them. As long as you live, you can change things. As long as you fight, you have a chance at a future—a better future.

Welaweli

We do have one solution that will work.

Both Kai and Zisser looked back at Welaweli as the crowd noise faded.

Welaweli

As many here are aware, our genetic architecture parallels that of the Hagad, diverging only in expression while maintaining compatibility with the Jinaan gene pool. Our societies have a shared history, marked by mutual enrichment through advanced biotechnological collaboration. This synergistic endeavor utilizes cutting-edge genetic engineering techniques to temporarily merge our species, creating a hybrid that embodies the strengths of both. My organization advocates for a permanent integration with the Hagad, a strategy designed to curb their more primal instincts while simultaneously supplying the essential nutrients to satiate their biological needs.

The floor trembled beneath them, sending ripples through the air. Above, the transparent metal ceiling radiated, undulating in a cascade of vibrant tints before cracking open, revealing gaping voids. Kai looked up at the rifts above as the Hagad emerged, ravaging their malleable frames through the compromised structure.

Small metallic shards showered from the roof, clattering against the Jinaan's cephali. A wave of piercing cries rippled through the crowd as spectators gradually scattered from the vicinity. The Hagad mercilessly curled their slithering grips around the screaming children, eating them whole. Kai screamed in fear before catching himself in the moment, gaining agency again. By the time the ninth child had been ravened, a contingent of the Jinaan army stormed onto the scene.

Kai

You weren’t kidding when you said you guys were hungry! How did they convince your people to merge with them?

Zisser

(Mind-to-mind transmission)

We lost the war. The Jinaan convinced us that we did not have to die and that we could live together in peace. They promised us a never-ending supply of nutrients if we cooperated. So, for the next 4,857 years, we agreed to live together as one species, which the Jinaan’s technology facilitated.

Kai

So what the fuck happened to you guys? How did you go from a highly developed hybrid species to what pretty much resorts to cannibalism?

Zisser

(Mind-to-mind transmission)

About 4,500 years after The Great Merging, we learned to cognitively disconnect some brain functions to communicate with one another secretly. We could speak to each other through mind transmissions.

Kai

Oh, like telepathy. Like what you're doing with me now?

Zisser

(Mind-to-mind transmission)

Indeed, you are correct. Initially, it served as an experiment to ascertain our boundaries and explore the extent of our capabilities. As time unfolded, we grew comfortable enough to articulate our apprehensions regarding our nutrient intake, which left us feeling somewhat unfulfilled. We began to suspect that the Jinaan were deliberately diminishing our strength to ensure our submissiveness and compliance.

Kai flinched at the sound of loud lasers piercing the heads of Hagad in the background.

Zisser

After several disease outbreaks and enough time passing, we executed our plan. Without a way to defeat us, we quickly devoured all of the Jinaan. We needed more food, so we employed our genetically synthesized technology to rip timelines apart and jump to as many as would allow us to eat without affecting our existence. Our time envelope is now on the precipice of closing into an irreducible point.

Kai

You're running out of Jinaan. That's why you're here.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
You are the closest place with the limited amount of time we have.

Zisser unraveled the rest of the story for Kai, who appeared to soak up all the details, including his journey towards empathy. When Zisser finished sharing, they reentered the white boundless space before the particulars of their reality faded back in. Kai took a step back in surprise when he noticed his dislocated arm had completely healed.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
I utilized the White Space to heal your arm. Luckily, a dislocated shoulder for your species is a simple fix.

Kai gazed intently into two of Zisser's twelve eyes.

Kai
Thank you.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
You're going to need it to battle the Hagad.

Zisser looked over at his ship. The entrance stationed below the upper curvature of the vessel was still approachable.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
Inside my ship is an oval-shaped device. Make contact with the green light over the middle console and retrieve it.

Kai deftly ascended a series of rugged rocks, gracefully leaping over another obstacle before arriving at the derelict ship, its upper half shrouded in a blanket of rubble. The door stood ajar, inviting him in. As he entered, his gaze fell upon the central console, and with a gentle caress through the green illuminated liquid light, it vaulted open at his touch. He seized the oval-shaped device and exited

the vessel. Just then, Zisser, utilizing one of his intact tentacles, gracefully claimed it from Kai's grasp.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
My scanners reveal that the only way for my technology to work with your biographical makeup is to utilize the White Space to nonlocally reprogram you through a different set of quantified fields. The data of your body's molecules will be relinked through an artificially computed multiversal gradient required for ripping and bending spacetime. One of the many functions of this oval device can facilitate that process.

Kai
You're going to trust a primitive lifeform like me with reality-ripping technology?

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
It is not a matter of trust but rather a matter of redemption. Since I do not have long to live, I can download the instructions for its use into you. It will serve you better to reduce the time it takes to file this data in your new multi-dimensional brains.

Kai
I suppose that's a better idea than taking the time to educate me on interdimensional alien technology.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
Are you willing to take on this responsibility?

Kai
Do I really have a choice?

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
You do have a choice. One option may save all life on your planet, while the other definitively deletes your entire history. At that point, you would have no choice.

Kai
Which means I never had a choice at any point. Let's get this done.

A navy blue light enveloped the oval device before a tubular web air-crawled towards Kai. It found its way through his chest cavity and into his heart. Light packets floated in Kai's bloodstream until they reached his bone marrow.

Within an instant, Kai's skin vibrated bright red as it vaped off into steam. A short moment later, Kai's body turned into a shadow within a fractaled rainbow. His shadow form then broke into cubicle pieces, each imploding into infinitely dense points that bent the space where Kai stood like a cloth.

From a distance, the airspace appeared like a broken mirror, pulling the fabric of reality around it into the dimensionless points. Then, the vertices of that bent space exploded into cubicle pieces again, each gravitating back to one another as they reprocessed into a shadow body fractaling rainbowed patterns. Kai's body reverse-steamed itself into a brightening and vibrating red color before simmering to his original physical state. He quickly slipped into a new set of clothes while Zisser communicated with him.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
Your transformation is complete. I have stored all the instructions you need to facilitate spacetime manipulation. Now that I have done this for you, would you do me the favor of ending my pain?

Kai
Why can't you do to yourself what you did to my arm? Is it that difficult? Or better yet, can I just go back in time and prevent you from dying?

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
I can see and feel in both of your eyes the realization of the inevitability of my death. You already know that if you saved my past self, the empathy reignited in me would never have occurred, and subsequently, you would have no way to defeat us. This has to be done, Kai.

The sound of multiple helicopters roared in the distance of the Ouray mountain ranges. Kai looked up and out through the hole above them. He could see rays of white light pouring into the cave, growing brighter with each passing second.

Kai
What do you need me to do?

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
I need you to rip open a cosmic cavity through the coronal-angled plane of my first brain—the one sitting inside the frontal top of my head. I filed the instructions in sub-sub-subsection 20114658.94.4.36567/T.t.T-4k7k(2.1x2.2)² of your synthesized superimposed fourth-dimensional brain. Be careful when crossing higher brain borders, especially your first time. That means only putting one peripheral unit through the higher-spatial interface at a time until you develop a refinement method.

Kai
And my once former puny brain understood that.

As the choppers approached the cave, Kai could feel the presence of other infinite potentials wrapped up into being closing in on him. Kai had a new view that could perceive four-dimensional spacetime. He could calculate a wide array of scenarios culminating around him, and every move, big and small, held the weight of all infinite outcomes in the lower space of three dimensions. To scale it down to something relatable, a three-dimensional human can see all the options an ant can’t on a two-dimensional surface.

Kai made his first move, closing his eyes. As he concentrated, he discovered he could alter the very fabric of reality around him, literally slowing down the speed

of light. His hands began to morph into what he called 'hyper-hands,' creating a mesmerizing effect as the light around them warped and shifted. This manipulation caused his hands to blend into a spectrum of colors—first blue, then purple, and finally red, each hue shimmering with the intensity of his power. This effect resembled an ever-changing display of hands and fingers emerging from his beige wrists, bringing all potentials into focus. He extended both hyper-hands toward Zisser, abducting his own arms away from his body. The air between them vibrated, and suddenly a glowing slit opened in the fabric of spacetime, splitting the fourth dimension like a seam through Zisser's forehead. Just before his life came to an end, Zisser's eyes darted in different directions as his face fell through the trans-two-dimensional vertex.

Chapter 4 - Rabbit Holes

A helicopter hovered over the cave, shining a beam of heavy light on Kai and Zisser's corpse. The light leaked into the portal, exposing the visage of the now faceless interdimensional being lying on dirt ground in a rose garden. Kai looked up for a quick moment before jumping through the cosmic outlet.

He fell through to the other side, landing in the prone position with his elbows bent, absorbing some of the impact of the dirt ground just inches away from Zisser's severed face. Kai quickly squirmed into the supine position, witnessing several military personnel slide down the chopper ropes and dismount on the pile of rocks in the cave. One military personnel peaked his head through the transdimensional opening, glazing his attention toward Kai, hyperventilating on the ground from the other side.

Military Personnel 1

I am Lieutenant Kowalsky of the United States military. We have designated this area as a high level threat. I need you to identify yourself and state your purpose here.

Kai's eyes closed to focus on sealing the gateway. The cosmic edges vibrated inward, prompting the Lieutenant to step back. The bright South Florida sun struggled to break through the looming presence of the cosmic anomaly, casting a surreal shadow over Kai. As the portal slowly began to shut, its edges flickered with energy, releasing a cascade of golden light. With each inch it closed, the oppressive darkness receded, until at last, the barrier vanished completely, bathing Kai in the unfiltered brilliance of the sun, illuminating him as if he were emerging from a dream.

Coming in from Colorado's cold and dry mountain air, the South Florida humidity was palpably noticeable on a cloudless afternoon. Kai was in the garden of his adoptive parents, surrounded by the roses they planted a year ago, which had died just a few weeks after fully blossoming. He was back in the year 2023, not long before the world tore itself in half in response to Israel's seventy-five-year-long occupation and genocide.

As a being wrapped in three directions, Kai's former existence could not bend his boundaries through four-dimensional spacetime. When Zisser reprogrammed Kai’s biography through a higher continuum, his three-dimensional structure could only exist in a newly simulated copy of itself. His existence filtered through a computational gradient with storage space for large model data and languages that could suspend itself into three dimensions in the form of Kai. In basic terms, he was reborn as a cosmic supercomputer that could rip and reangle spacetime through higher and lower dimensions.

As a cosmic supercomputer, Kai could manipulate the laws of nature by balancing out cosmic equations. Once Kai solved all the necessary math, he would gain access to a function. Without this manipulation of the universal equations, the role of an observer is the most a time paradox would allow for Kai. The cosmic equations split Kai’s timelines like a kaleidoscope so he can break laws. On one timeline lies the original copy of himself playing out in a continuous loop from birth until the moment before he jumped through the portal back to 2023. On the other lies a new copy of Kai, who can interact with a once untouchable point in spacetime, powered by the original universe.

The future Kai traveled from artificially became part of his past. Creating an artificial past is a variable given to the other side of the cosmic equation, allowing a time paradox to be manipulated. The original past artificially segmented from his birth until his first cosmic crossover stays within an infinite loop, imprisoning the original Kai.

The new copy of Kai from birth up to his first cosmic crossover point reassigns between artificially segmented copies of his pastline, the cosmic crossover acting as the cause-glue that allows a time paradox to be physically broken. The cause-glue also allows the newly spliced artificial timeline to write itself into a new future, even a past segment copy being allowed to be resphaped as novel. Any leftover past segment is fitted into its original mold or replaces a past segment if needed. Kai must be careful, for any unfitting segments cause cosmic ripples that can interfere with the woven timelines. The reassignment of Kai’s presentline as an artificial past segment will happen every time Kai rips and folds lower spacetime through higher spacetime. It acts as a form of payment to the cosmic law enforcement.

Kai was glad to have escaped the U.S. military, but now he had to figure out what to do next with his new responsibility. He realized he was in a safe place to take the necessary time to plan. Kai also knew that the aliens were running on a different “now” than him and would still have to be mindful of his time. At the moment, he had the space to breathe.

He had a fresh start. With no record of the cop he killed, he was free from hiding. He was free from his obligations as a resistance fighter for now. He was, however, not free from the pain of his family disowning him even though it had not happened yet on this timeline. When it plays out again, Kai’s reactions may not be precisely the same. Altering the scenario was a concern for him because, even though this was an opportunity to end his inner suffering, it was what birthed the new Kai. The Kai that didn’t cave under pressure to please his family and friends. The Kai that was willing to rage against an unjust system.

He had a lot to sort through during this visit. He sat on the ground for another minute before getting up and dusting himself off. Then, he walked around to the front of his adoptive parents’ one-story contemporary house and knocked on the oddly bright red door.

Kai
Surprise!

Dad
Kai! I could have sworn I just saw you inside the house!

On the first earth, Kai visited his parents for a week. His memory of this moment was one of the last times he was happy, so it was natural for him to rip open a portal to his adoptive parent’s house in the summer of 2023.

Kai
I went out the Florida room door to get some fresh air in the garden.

Dad
I hope you didn’t touch the roses.

Kai

Now, why would I feel the need to touch the roses, Dad?

Dad

I don't know, to eat them? You tell me.

They both chuckled. Kai and his father had a great relationship where they could taunt each other. They did not always get along, but they overcame those issues. At the moment, Zionism was not a problem for the world at large, however, Kai still had the memories of his adoptive parents' loyalty pledge to Israel after October 7th, 2023. Although Kai's adoptive parents were appalled by his stance against Zionism, if it weren't for the killing of a cop, they would have been the only family he would have left. But Kai also lost them because of it.

He now had to pretend that nothing happened to keep the illusion alive long enough for him to devise a plan. Kai entered the house and headed straight to the guest bedroom, jumping on the bed and falling fast asleep for the next sixteen hours. He awoke to a growling stomach that gravitated him toward the warm, welcoming kitchen.

Mom

Are you all right, Kai? I tried waking you up for dinner last night.

Kai nodded.

Mom

Are you sure? Sixteen hours doesn't seem healthy.

Kai lightly chuckled.

Kai

Yes, Mom. I'm fine. The extra hours at work are just catching up with me.

Mom

I'm making coffee. Want some?

Kai

That would be nice.

Kai assisted his mother in crafting a vibrant vegan breakfast of tofu patty bagels and warm stovetop skillet granola. After their meal, they set off to Miami for an art festival, the sun casting a golden color over the animated streets. As night fell, Kai sat at the desk in the guest bedroom, the silvery glare of the moon illuminating his thoughtful expression. He knew he had to return to the future soon, but he needed a game plan. Kai recognized the futility of altering his past misfortunes; those hardships were essential for the tapestry of his life. Instead, he resolved to reflect on the alien's visceral remarks.

Kai remembered how he excised Zisser's visage, realizing his true potential was far more expansive. He would have to be creative if he had any chance against a highly advanced, voracious species from a higher-dimensional pocket of spacetime. As the long shadows of the night receded, giving way to the nascent rays of dawn that footed upon his chin, Kai extricated himself from the deep embrace of his chair.

He closed his eyes and clapped his hands together as they went hyper. He moved them apart to orchestrate the velocity changes of light, warping and shifting the magnetizing colors of his peripherals. The space around him crackled with potential, an electric atmosphere charged with cosmic wonder as his hands radiated an exquisite stretching of colors—deep cerulean dissolving into rich violets before igniting into vibrant reds. This visual symphony heralded the rippling of the fabric of reality just a few feet away. Before him, a rift tore open through the fourth dimension, revealing a portal to the familiar confines of his bedroom in New York City, bathed in the soft, velvety darkness of September 2023. He nuked a burrito before lying down to sleep.

When he awoke, it was nine in the morning. He caught up with his dental, mental, and bodily hygiene before the afternoon and then split open the fabric of the fourth dimension to October of 2024, the day after the meeting with Zisser. Kai was enjoying an espresso at a quaint little coffee shop in the heart of London, England. He knew any day now, Zisser's species was coming. Being outside of U.S. jurisdiction made it easier for Kai to be ready for when the extraterrestrials came.

Another day passed, and there were still no signs of the aliens. Kai did not want to get distracted, however, he was also getting bored. He felt that practicing new tricks would be conducive to the creative process, so he tore open a square window to the dunes of the Sahara desert.

There, he came up with the idea of constructing “rabbit holes.” Kai had always been obsessed with the idea of higher spaces ever since he was eleven years old. As a kid with not many friends, Kai would spend hours living inside his head. The thought experiment that opened his mind to a deeper reality played out as an imaginary line that connected him to an imaginary friend he called Ipitoor Xeevnonan. He realized that no matter where Ipitoor Xeevnonan was in the universe, Kai would always connect to his fantasy playmate through the imaginary line.

Kai’s first vision was of a sphere he called the great circle, as if existence merely looped on itself. But after being turned into a cosmic supercomputer, he saw that reality was not enclosed by circles at all, it was bounded by horizons, dimensional interfaces where geometry stored memory. Through these horizons, he could alter local photonic-speed to manipulate the memory storage at these boundaries to rip open the fabric of lower dimensions and fold them through higher ones, where residually-entangled states damped through temporal kernels carry the record of past interactions. The fewer the folds between rips, the more of a lower dimension remained to tunnel through.

When Kai travels across place or time, he did not walk through empty air, he folded the fourth dimension. Each fold compressed a three-dimensional tunnel, pulling its two-dimensional endpoints into alignment so he could cross over in an instant. With the rabbit holes, he could leave the endpoints fixed, or re-angle them, stretching the tunnel into a longer corridor through the fourth continuum. The endpoints themselves were surfaces of spacetime, and by tilting them just beyond the observer’s field, Kai could hide them in plain sight. One end might open in Havana, 1955, and the other in Johannesburg, 1890, with temporary entrances scattered anywhere, anytime. From the outside, the tunnel remained unseen, like standing at the sealed face of a New York City passage, knowing that only fifty feet away an exit gaped wide, invisible behind the wall.

The energy from tearing the seams of spacetime created a light source with various colors bent around the cosmic three-dimensional tunnel. The colors flowed according to their portal shape. Within the rabbit holes, Kai got creative and formed the places to his will. He unlocked surface slots and molded their parameters to fit different objects and areas throughout the three-dimensional spacetime of his baseworld. He intended to create sanctuaries for people to stay and live in until the war ended.

As he gained more artistic skill with the rabbit holes, he compiled a mental list of all the most influential people throughout history he should kidnap. As he reviewed the list, the thought of his family being left behind simmered and boiled to the surface. Should he prioritize a family that disowned him or save the people who made the human species better?

The words of Zisser flowed through his head, “I have seen the potential of your species through you. If guided correctly, they can be what the Jinaan-Hagad failed to be. It is my dying wish that you see to it a vibrant future for your kind. Your people can become something more than what nature wrote out for them.” Kai thought to himself perhaps that would include his family members. Even Sol, his brother, who appeared to have the most selfish and sinister motives, may have the potential to unravel into something good.

The question is whether Kai pockets them before or after his family fallout. He realized that even if he saved them before the event, the issues would have manifested into another faulty form at a different time. His family’s shared and individual traumas had programmed an image of Kai as “The Devil” in their minds. No matter what he did differently, they would have found another excuse to try and paint him as a black sheep. In addition, his outcasting was foundational to his new responsibility, so Kai decided to get them post-crisis.

Kai tore through the veil of reality, manifesting an entrance to the depths of Squirrel Hill, nestled within the chaotic confines of his brother Sol’s basement apartment, a monument to despair, a cluttered mausoleum of dead dreams. Each corner of the cramped space exhaled the pungent aroma of rot mingled with the acrid stench of stale alcohol and cigarette smoke, an olfactory assault that choked the air around him.

Dim, flickering light cast ghostly shadows across the remnants of a life unkempt. A coffee table, buried under the detritus of leftover takeout and crumpled wrappers, served as an altar to neglect. Clothes lay strewn haphazardly, an explosion of fabric reminiscent of chaotic thoughts spilling unchecked into the world. The grungy couch sagged under the weight of abandonment, while emo-punk posters screamed in muted colors, reverberating anthems of teenage rebellion that had grown stale, each peeling edge a testament to fading ideals.

The king-sized bed loomed against the far wall, a vast wasteland of discarded dreams and forgotten meals, where the residue of fast food mingled with the remnants of sleepless nights. It was a battlefield adorned with riddlin pills, tiny white sentinels of quiet desperation, offering a hollow semblance of control amidst the chaos. Israeli propaganda plastered the walls, proclaiming defiance in a space suffocated by the echoes of the past, drowning out the screams of fractured identity and attention-seeking despair.

As the door creaked open and Sol stepped inside, the gloom within the room thickened. He was greeted not by the warm embrace of brotherhood but by the oppressive weight of a thousand unspoken words, a stark reminder of their shared history marred by darkness. Here, in this forgotten lair of disarray, time slowed to a crawl, stewing in a pot of regret, isolation, and the eerie allure of lingering shadows.

Sol

How the fuck did you get in here, you God-damn cop killer?

Sol ran back out the door. Kai got up, ripped open a portal, jumped through it, and landed just feet behind Sol. Kai tore open another transdimensional doorway in front of his younger brother, who inadvertently ran through it. Before he could fathom what had happened, Kai closed the cosmic gateway to the rabbit hole. He then opened a separate one and walked through, Sol standing on the other side baffled.

Sol

I KNEW YOU WERE THE DEVIL! WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME, YOU SICK FUCK?!?

Kai

I know this will be hard to believe, but an interdimensional alien species is coming to eat us until there is no history left. I need you to -

Sol

Kai, I am done feeding into your delusions. I don't know what the fuck is going on right now, but I need you to leave me alone. I promise not to call the cops if you just leave me alone. Please!

Kai

Sol, please listen to me. I need you to stay here. It's for your own safety. Ok?

Sol

We abandoned you for a reason, Kai. Nobody wants anything to do with you! Don't you get that already?

Kai knew he wouldn't get through to Sol, but he already had him where he needed him to be. Kai opened a cosmic outlet behind himself and walked backward to the other side. Sol attempted to run towards it, but his older brother sealed the exit before he could finish taking two steps. Sol fell to his knees, weeping in tears.

Kai conjured another shimmering spacetime window, its edges rippling with energy, which led directly into the cozy garage of his sister Talia's residence in Maverick, Long Island, New York. Inside the house, the fragrant aroma of sautéed onions and garlic mingled with the sweet scent of simmering pasta, a testament to Talia's culinary prowess as she prepared dinner for her two children and devoted husband.

With careful deliberation, Kai approached the entrance that would usher him into the warmth of the home. He opened the door with the softest of motions, stepping into the familiar embrace of the space. Ascending the staircase, he moved with deliberate caution, each footfall a whisper against the wooden steps, striving to remain undetected.

As he reached the halfway point, the sweet notes of a playful melody draped over him from the adjacent piano room, only to be interrupted by the sudden

appearance of Sammy, Talia's youngest son. The boy emerged like a sunbeam breaking through a cloud, looking up at his uncle Kai with wide, curious eyes that sparkled with innocent surprise. The air was filled with the comforting blends of family life, each scent and sound weaving a tapestry of home that enveloped Kai in nostalgia and warmth.

Sammy

Uncle Kai, I thought you were on the run from the cops! What are you doing here?

Kai heard a thump upstairs, followed by fast steps down the staircase to the living area. Aaron, Talia's Wall Street Banker husband, jumped past the last few stairs to get to Kai quicker. He shot a dead stare into Kai's eyes for a couple of seconds before throwing a punch and missing his jaw by several inches. Kai knew the probability of him doing it again was relatively high and blocked the next assault. Kai's sight into all probable futures was narrow but wide enough to dodge a punch.

Aaron

Sammy, get your brother and go into the basement!

Sammy froze.

Aaron

Sammy, NOW!

Sammy ran into the main living room area where his older brother Nate had been watching TV. He grabbed him by the arm, and they ran into the basement.

Aaron

Kai, you know you aren't supposed to be here. What do you want?

Talia slowly entered the area, holding a knife in her right hand. She looked at Kai angrily.

Kai

Talia, I know you won't, but believe me, *you and your family are in danger, and I need to get you guys out of here while there is still time.*

Talia

Even if I wanted to believe you, you murdered a cop, Kai. If I go with you, I will become a fugitive too. Do you want to do that to my kids?

Kai

It's not like that, Talia. There is an extraterrestrial threat coming to delete us from history! I need you to believe -

Aaron attempted to punch Kai again, but Kai pushed him to the ground this time. Aaron quickly got up and rolled his shirt sleeves up.

Aaron

Bro, I need you to shut the fuck up with your delusions. Showing your face here was a big mistake.

Kai closed his eyes and hyper-handed. A hole suddenly opened beneath Aaron, causing him to plunge down the rabbit hole. Talia stared at Kai in shock before he ripped open another gateway, this time underneath her. She screamed as she fell through.

Kai slashed a cosmic cavity in front of himself and walked through it into the basement. His nephews sat on the ground fearfully, holding each other. Kai frowned before he rifted a threshold under them. They shouted as they fell through.

Kai made his next stop at his Grandma's house in Miller Place, Long Island. She lived in a quaint, large house in the woods with her husband, who was not Kai's biological grandfather, but Kai still called him Grandpa Willy. They were both in bed watching a pornographic video when Kai popped in. He landed in their bathroom so as not to give them both a heart attack.

He slowly and quietly opened the bathroom door and exposed his grandparents, snuggling up with their eyes glued to the television screen. They weren't moving

or anything, just sitting entirely still. Kai coordinated a portal to his family's rabbit hole beneath their bed and TV. His grandparents landed a few feet away from their other kidnapped family members, who yelled in surprise. Kai severed the TV chord with a cosmic closing, and the image of dick and boobs searing into their grandchildren's minds powered off.

Kai unlocked another three-dimensional passageway through the realm of the fourth dimension. His next destination lay in the heart of the world's current state of affliction — Israel, a land steeped in conflict where his sister Dev resided. She and her husband embraced a spirited existence among their five lively children, nestled within an illegal settlement that exuded the essence of a bohemian haven.

Their dwelling, in Bat Ayin, was a sanctuary perched upon the undulating hills, wherein the aroma of dying wildflowers fraternized with the distant saltiness of the Mediterranean Sea, a vast azure expanse beckoning from the back porch, but barely to be seen in the dark of night. On the rooftop, the glimmering sprawl of Tel Aviv sparkled like fragmented jewels in the opposite direction. However, an ever-present reminder of the discord was not far beyond the idyllic vista, the echo of sirens and the ground-shaking explosions off in the distance of unyielding strife associating with the cries of orphaned children and zealous avengers.

Kai entered his sister's bedroom, where she was sleeping beside her snoring husband. He created a cosmic gateway to the rabbit hole underneath their bed, letting it fall through. He closed off the portal before he could hear them react.

He then went into her children's rooms to do the same thing. When he finished, he went to his adoptive parents' house and dropped them into the rabbit hole as well. He then went to both of his divorced biological parents' apartments and brought them into the rabbit hole.

Kai had no intention of forgetting his family lost in the sprawling embrace of the forest. With determined resolve, he tunneled through the ethereal fabric of the fourth dimension, crafting a temporary sanctuary for those on the other side of the rabbit hole. As he emerged, the familiar faces materialized through the illuminating cosmic window, gasping in disbelief at the sight of a friend they thought had been devoured by the clutches of their hegemonic foe.

Forest friend 1
Kai! What in the world is this?

Sahab, bursting with joy, sprinted towards the two-dimensional entrance of the rabbit hole, her radiant smile lighting up the faces of everyone she passed. Coming to a halt at the threshold, she beheld the miraculous sight of Kai's lively return.

Kai
(relief flooding his voice)
Sahab!

Sahab echoed back a mixture of exhilaration and disbelief in her tone.

Sahab
Kai!?!

With a joyful leap, Sahab vaulted into the rabbit hole, rushing towards him and enveloping him in her warm embrace, her lips meeting his in a fervent kiss that held the weight of time lost. The crowd beyond the portal gathered, their eyes wide with awe, prompting Kai to close the rip in reality behind them.

As they pulled apart, Sahab playfully tore Kai's shirt in two, the fabric falling away like a whisper of wind. A crack in the rabbit hole's ground gaped open, revealing a plush bed that slowly rose from the depths of his bedroom space in 2023, where memories of their fleeting escape into the forest lingered like a distant echo. The ceiling of the rabbit hole peeled back, unveiling a vast tapestry of twinkling stars, each one singing an ancient melody of hope and wonder.

With a swift motion, Kai delicately sliced away Sahab's blouse and pants through the fourth dimension, the fabric drifting downward like feathers caught in a gentle breeze. With no underwear to discard, she turned her attention to Kai’s, sliding them down playfully, and with intimacy igniting them both like wildfire. Bound by their kisses, they tumbled onto the bed.

Sahab and Kai awoke to the night sky stretched out like a vast canvas, draped in a deep shade of indigo that seemed to swallow all light. Against the dark backdrop, the intense rays of countless stars pierced through, each one a tiny beacon of brilliance. The light from distant galaxies shimmered, creating ethereal wisps of color that danced across the expanse, hinting at the mysteries of the universe beyond.

Shooting stars streaked across this cosmic tableau, leaving luminous trails in their wake, brief but utterly captivating. These fleeting moments of brilliance sparked a sense of wonder and whimsy in both Kai and Sahab, as if the very sky was alive, breathing in bursts of light and energy. A harmonious hymn of joy resonated through the ether, intertwining their souls with the power of a thousand suns as Sahab positioned herself on top of Kai, swaying her hips to the tune of love.

The air was still, but the atmosphere crackled with the magic of the universe, a reminder of the infinite possibilities that lay just beyond the observable, baring the naked reality in its midst. It was a breathtaking sight, a moment of pure serenity held within the embrace of a dark, starry night. As the brilliant celestial glow brought depth to Sahab’s rhythm, Kai felt the fleeting nature of time he did not have with each intimate moment tugging away at him. His mind wandered off into the future that awaited his planet, his face seeped in worry.

Sahab
Something is different about you.

Kai
My cloud, I need to come clean.

The gravity of his words brought Sahab's animated twerk to a halt, her body stilling as she turned her full attention to Kai. She leaned in slightly, her brow furrowing in confusion over what he had to say, the rhythm of her movement replaced by a palpable intensity in the air between them.

Kai
I didn’t come back to join the resistance.

Sahab completely froze her hips. She turned away slightly, glancing around the rabbit hole with uncertainty.

Sahab

Let me guess, a bunch of aliens from outer space are coming to take over the planet, and you are Earth's only hope?

Kai

Well, yeah — kind of.

With a heavy heart, Sahab slid off of Kai's dick and then the bed, standing tall. Sahab sighed as she took a few steps forward. Kai turned his fully naked frontal body to face Sahab's beautiful backside.

Kai

I can't do it alone.

Kai got out of bed and gently embraced her from behind, his arms wrapping around her waist, fingers brushing over her skin like soft waves lapping against the shore. She leaned into him, surrendering to his warmth, as he brought his lips to her left ear. She stared deeply into the ethereal boundaries of the transdimensional tunnel that fractaled the colorful illumination produced by the energy used to rip the cosmic opening above them, complementing the beautiful view of the heavens above.

Kai

(Whispering softly)
You saved me once. Let me do the same for you.

Sahab's lips brushed against his cheek, turning to wrap her arms around him tightly before resting her chin on his shoulder, the air thick with unspoken fears.

Sahab

You already made up your mind — you aren't staying, are you?

Longing seeped into his words.

Kai

I would love to, my pure water.

Sahab lifted her chin, eyes blazing with despair.

Sahab

But you can't, can you?

She leaned back into him, an unguarded sadness in her posture.

Sahab

Where are you headed next?

Kai

I need help from an old friend.

After gathering their comrades and sharing the heavy burden of their circumstances, Kai led them into the plush rabbit hole he had meticulously crafted from fragments of space and time. Now that he had gathered all those he cherished into the safe havens, his spirit ignited with purpose. He had chosen his next move carefully, hopping back in time to 1951, just a whisper after World War II, to summon the brilliance of Albert Einstein from the recesses of history.

Chapter 5 - Solid Irony

1951 seemed ripe for the audacious retrieval of Albert Einstein. By this juncture, his groundbreaking ideas had permeated the intellectual ether, mitigating the potential repercussions of such an act. While abducting Einstein would not shield him from the annals of erasure in history, it would grant him a fleeting reprieve, particularly if the meticulous machinations of time were to culminate in the serene afternoon of July 4th, 1951, amidst the tranquil streets of Princeton, New Jersey.

Kai cut in through some towering trees, their leaves a rich emerald, rustling gently in the warm breeze, as the transdimensional window shut with ease. He stode down the road that the lush greenery protected which also provided patches of cool shade for families and friends who gathered for patriotic picnics.

The charming streets of the town lined with historic buildings, their ivy-clad façades enhanced by the bright summer light. Flags fluttered proudly from porches and lampposts, displaying red, white, and blue in a tribute to Independence Day. The air carried an enticing fragrance of grilled foods and the sweet scent of blossoming flowers from well-tended gardens.

As the afternoon unfolded, laughter and cheer resonated through the streets, with children darting about, clutching balloons and sparklers. The sound of clanging bells from church steeples marked the passage of time while music spilled from corner gatherings where neighbors and friends came together to celebrate. Kai strode past the clusters of people watching a parade with proud marching bands and floats adorned with stars and stripes, encapsulating the spirit of 1950s America.

The scene was a picturesque blend of community joy and the charm of a quintessential post-World War II town. Princeton's historic backdrop provided a timeless setting for a day of pride and togetherness. The warmth of the sun on skin, the joyous atmosphere, and the sense of history made this July 4th a moment to be cherished.

Once Kai had donned the stylish summer attire befitting the period, he made his way down Mercer Street until he arrived at a residence marked with the number “112.” Being mindful not to startle the illustrious Albert Einstein, Kai opted to knock gently on the door. Within moments, his revered theoretical physicist stood before him, observing Kai with a gentle, encouraging gaze, inviting him to share his thoughts.

Kai

Hi.

Kai ripped open a transdimensional gateway behind him to his family’s rabbit hole. Albert Einstein’s face lit up in wonder.

Kai

This will sound random, but a time-deleting alien species is coming for us, and I need you to jump into that rabbit hole behind me for your safety.

Albert Einstein

I am quite fascinated by the manner in which you conveyed this to me. Any other approach would have seemed implausible.

Albert Einstein stepped confidently through the portal, pausing momentarily to glance back at Kai, who followed closely behind. At a far enough distance, Kai’s brother Sol remained oblivious to their arrival, engrossed in his own thoughts. With an assertive motion, Kai sealed the universal access behind him. Albert cast his gaze across the gathering of Kai’s family, whose attention had now shifted to the unexpected presence of the renowned physicist. As he surveyed the enigmatic rabbit hole, Albert appeared to ponder its intricate mechanics, his mind racing to unravel the mysteries contained within.

Kai

I’m Kai. Kai Adleman.

Albert looked back at Kai and nodded before turning back in awe at the cosmic structure enveloping them.

Kai

I brought all the necessary resources to utilize during your stay here. You have plenty of food, water, bathrooms, and beds. I also set up technology called television to entertain you.

Einstein reached out and touched the High Definition flat-screen TV a few feet away. Kai turned it on, springing cartoons to life, with characters comically smashing each other to death. Einstein curiously tilted his head to the right. He then knelt to grab the power chord connected to an outlet outside the rabbit hole in Kai's apartment living room in 2022.

Kai

If you need anything else, don't hesitate to let me know. I created a communications area behind you if you need to reach out.

Albert Einstein stood up and turned around to face a mouth-sized portal with a view of the back of his head inside of it. He walked towards the communication area as the back of his head moved further away from view inside the transdimensional hole. Kai lifted his left arm, and the view inside the entrance to the mouth-sized portal shifted to his Grandma. Albert turned to face Kai, who pointed at the exiting end of the mouth-sized portal, which followed his arm's every movement through a program he created.

Albert Einstein

Out of curiosity, what year do you emanate from?

Kai

2024.

Albert Einstein

Hmm. Interesting. Very interesting.

Albert murmured inaudible thoughts as his mind traveled into his own world.

Kai

I know that look. It's the look I have when I'm deeply lost in a thought experiment.

Albert’s eyes reacted to Kai’s voice, turning his attention to him.

Albert Einstein

I might be able to help, but only if you can retrieve a document the Nazis destroyed. It was a working collaborative effort with me and several other esteemed colleagues. We called it “God’s Manifesto”. If you can find it, I believe it will be worth your while.

Kai nodded.

Kai

Tell me when and where, and I will see what I can do.

Albert Einstein

On March 14th, 1933, within the confines of the Prussian Academy of Science's physics department in Berlin, you will likely discover the document concealed among the various offices on one of the bookshelves. Seek out a hardcover book adorned in bright green, blue, and yellow — a striking contrast to the surrounding plain volumes. It should be quite unmistakable, as we intended it to be distinctly visible. Note that the text is not in English, so please ensure to bring it to me for translation.

Kai ripped open the fourth dimension to his left, Sol taking notice.

Kai

I’ll see you soon.

In a decisive yet silent motion, Kai stepped through the glowing cosmic gateway, finding himself in an random office within the physics department of the Prussian Academy of Science, circa March 14th, 1933, in the late morning light. Turning to his left, he cast his gaze out the window, absorbing the threatening spectacle beyond. The atmosphere was thick with the presence of Nazi flags and propaganda posters, a haunting testament to the era’s ideological turmoil. He allowed himself a moment of reflection, letting the surroundings sink into his consciousness.

With purpose renewed, Kai set out in search of the elusive tome. His quest yielded no fruit in the first five chambers he explored, each yielding only frustration. Fortune, however, smiled upon him in the sixth room, where the third row of bookshelves sheltered the coveted volume he sought.

Seizing it with fervor, Kai quickly tore open a portal back to the rabbit hole. As he stepped through, Kai was drawn to Albert Einstein, who embodied a universe of knowledge that had always inspired his curiosity. But, before Kai could seal the cosmic doorway, Sol unexpectedly burst through, only to vanish in an instant, propelled by urgency as if pursued by the wraith of mortality itself.

With barely enough time to process his sense of the departing presence, Kai closed the portal just three fleeting seconds after his own return. An immediate sense of loss washed over him; he could feel one less infinite potential wrapped up into being intertwined with his company. Surveying the rabbit hole with a faint inkling and curiosity, Kai noticed Albert Einstein gesturing beyond him, as if inviting him to acknowledge the peculiar spectacle that had just unfolded behind his back.

Albert Einstein

A curious phenomenon has occurred, as if a being mirroring your familial likeness has traversed your dimensional rift, seemingly attempting to flee from the very fabric of this interspace. Do you possess any knowledge that might illuminate this perplexing observation?

Kai

I'm not going to sugar-coat it, Einstein. I'm the black sheep of my family, and they all think I'm a terrorist for defending the rights of those who our people are causing a holocaust against.

Albert Einstein

I find it deeply unsettling to learn that the world remains unchanged. What do you mean when you say, 'our people are causing a holocaust'? Who exactly is being targeted?

Kai hesitated for a brief beat but quickly reaffirmed to himself the reason for his admiration of Albert Einstein. He not only understood the dangers of nationalism,

specifically Zionism but also stood as the preeminent authority on the intricate concepts of spacetime. He was undoubtedly the first individual a time traveler should seek out, particularly one possessing profound insight into the enduring trauma that had afflicted their people across generations.

Kai

You once stated that you would "much rather see reasonable agreement with the Arabs on the basis of living together in peace than the creation of a Jewish state." We never ended up living together in peace with the Palestinians or any of the neighboring Arab countries. We became worse than the Nazis with a hubris that stretches across the entire globe.

Albert Einstein

What evidence have you observed that has guided you to arrive at this conclusion?

Kai

Israeli soldiers proudly record themselves on film raping men with electric rods while the country settled a national debate that allowed for more of the abhorrent behavior.

Albert Einstein

Might there be a different interpretation of the circumstances at hand?

Kai

What's there to interpret? They're not hiding it like the Nazis did. Israel showcases their trophies of beheaded babies, using the biblical reference of Amelek to justify it. They are committing a near-infinite list of atrocities and getting away with it. Everything they claim the Palestinians do is just a projection of everything they have done before and after the world broke on October 7th, 2023, including the exploitation of their own Israeli citizens as human shields through The Hannibal Directive.

Albert Einstein

Pray tell, where does the remainder of humanity find itself amidst the unfolding of these events?

Kai

That's the problem. Israel has spent the last half century or so taking root in all corners of the world, the United States being the head of its global tyranny. There is no place you can go where Zionism does not have some sort of stronghold, forcing people like me to go into hiding. Now we fight from the shadows. Nationalism was given steroids, wreaking havoc on the world, and destroying families like mine, so humanity lives in distant disconnected pockets.

Albert Einstein

I have never been one to easily navigate the complexities of human interactions, so I can relate to your struggles. Over the course of my existence, I have come to appreciate the importance of approaching challenges with both patience and tact. My thoughts often soar high above the peaks, creating a chasm between my perspective and that of those who dwell at lower altitudes. I suspect you grasp this concept as well. It is evident in your decision to maintain your family close, despite the conflicts that arose, and it mirrors the reason you will pursue your brother, fueled by a similar understanding.

Kai's eyes gleamed with unshed tears as he turned his gaze aside. After a brief moment of contemplation, he regained his composure and confronted Einstein once more.

Kai

I'll be back.

Kai handed Einstein the book. He ripped open another cosmic window and climbed into 1933 Prussian Academy of Science in the same room Sol ran into. Upon exiting the boundary between the lab and the rabbit hole, Kai stepped on top of a cluttered lab table. As soon as he jumped off, he closed the cosmic entrance. Sol would not have gone far because Kai coordinated his trip to Sol's "now." Kai had to coordinate it with Sol's present time so as not to create adverse splits in the timeline. He strode out of the room and into a hallway. He peaked through several rooms while walking to find an exit to the building. With no success, Kai walked out of the institution and into the growing world of Nazism.

In the heart of Berlin, 1933, the oppressive atmosphere of Nazi propaganda hung thick in the air like a dark cloud. The streets were draped in the stark black, red,

and white of Nazi flags that flapped ominously in the cool breeze, each banner a chilling reminder of the regime's looming presence. The architecture dominated above him, a mix of grandeur and foreboding, as if the academy itself were a silent witness to the dark tide that was sweeping across Germany, transforming the city into an unsettling tableau of despair and resolve.

Outside the imposing façade of the Prussian Academy of Sciences, the stone steps were lined with stern-faced party officials, their uniforms crisp and their gazes meticulously attuned to detect any anomalies. Before they turned their heads towards him, Kai ripped open an escape and jumped through it, landing a few streets away. He escaped instant trouble, but not the vibrant colors of propaganda that clashed with the dreary gray of the cobblestone streets, amplifying the feeling of unease that permeated the air. As crowds passed by, hushed whispers clashed with the rustling of newspapers, revealing a society fractured under the weight of fear and conformity.

Kai imagined that his brother would be seething with fury upon discovering that he had ventured into the depths of Nazi Germany. He was acutely aware of the profound irony inherent in having a fervent Zionist such as his brother ensnared within the depths of Nazi Germany, for Zionists had never anticipated being perceived as the unwitting heralds of the Nazi regime by the world at large. Unable to secure revenge against their Nazi oppressors, Zionists instead scapegoated a group they perceived as inferior. They maintained the same superior race mentality, aspiring to cultivate an environment befitting "God's chosen people."

The irony solidifies with Hitler’s claim of divine right over Germany in his infamous book called “My Struggle.” Now, Kai’s Zionist brother gets to taste his own medicine. The feeling of cosmic justice quickly turned into remorse, for Kai knew his brother, too, was a victim of multigenerational trauma.

With each passing moment, Kai feared the worst for his brother and began to panic. He opened a portal to the tallest building he could find and searched from there. When he had no luck finding Sol, Kai tore open a cavity through the fourth dimension to jump to another tall building a mile away.

Kai searched for Sol for countless hours, his heart aching with hope, yet the encroaching darkness began to entwine his very essence, extinguishing the flicker of his spirit. With a loud burst of sound, Kai cried out to the dark, weary night. He fell to his knees as if to plead with the forces of nature to bring his younger brother back to him.

Sol

Kai, help! They're taking me! Kai, PLEASE!!!!

Kai spotted his brother a few hundred feet away being dragged out of a bar by a couple of Nazis. He ripped open a cosmic aperture, angled in its axial dimension, raging through the fascist on the right side of Sol like sliced butter. Everything above the Brownshirt's hips fell through the other side of the portal. Kai then popped through it as if replacing the Nazi's torso with his own before the political puppet's knees caved to the ground.

Kai

Hi Sol! Did you miss me?

Sol screamed in fear as the Nazi's severed bottom half hit the cold hard ground. With his soul drenched in endorphinic fuel, Kai combusted and punched the other Nazi in the face, then grabbed his brother, pulling him through the universal window. Sol landed on the other Nazi's disjoined torso, getting blood all over his clothes. Kai closed the portal and helped his brother stand up.

Kai

Please come back with me. I know we don't have a good relationship, but I need you to trust me. I put you there for a reason. Maybe one day we can talk about it more, but we need to head back down the rabbit hole for now.

Sol nodded. Kai ripped open a rabbit hole in the ground, and they jumped in together.

Chapter 6 - The White Rabbit

Kai remembered how quickly the Hagad ate the Jinaan and calculated the average time for one of them to finish off eight billion humans, his estimated figure being a year. Kai dug a deeper assumption, the hole being eight billion Hagad to match every human consumed, which, depending on their locations, could be a matter of minutes before they filled up on every course. He ravaged deeper into the psychological rabbit hole, the thought of the interdimensional predators outpacing his assumptions and feasting on the moments before their arrival, deepening his dreaded state of mind. He wondered if he was ready to face such a catastrophic reality where an entire year of humans was devoured in a day.

He felt a tremor of fear at the realization that the Hagad might outnumber his species two to one. Their plan to consume every living being extended through the present and deep into the past, meaning that even if Kai traveled thousands of years back in time, it wouldn't hinder the Hagad's relentless dominance. No matter where or when he went, the Hagad would continue their consumption into the past, making it impossible for Kai to reverse their impact on the timeline of Earth's inhabitants without splitting timelines in such a way that would cause cosmic tsunamis. At that moment, he realized the delicate nature of his role in ripping time and that the only way to solve the cosmic problem was through rebalancing the whole equation around the odds.

Kai understood that the Hagad would probably not discriminate once they learned that there are significant-sized animals on this planet other than humans. That would give him more time. Regardless, Kai concluded that it would be best not to risk any earthlings getting eaten.

He saved his family and the most important man a time traveler can have at his disposal, so he reprioritized his plan. Kai decided he wouldn't snatch influential people from the past anymore. Instead, he would return to Ouray, Colorado, in October of 2024 at the crash site, where Zisser's friends would likely hone in on first. Sol told the family how Kai had saved him from the Nazis, easing the tension as Kai shared his updated plans.

Sol

When will you be back?

Kai

Hopefully, sooner than later.

Kai walked over to Albert Einstein, who sat on a lounge chair, sifting through his colorful-covered book and sipping a cup of black tea. He looked up at Kai approaching him.

Albert Einstein

I have come across some intriguing and thought-provoking arguments in this book.

Kai

Anything I could put to practice?

Albert Einstein

In earlier reflections, I have posited that der Alte does not play dice with the universe. And yet, I must confess a certain disquiet now arises within me. Your presence—arriving from a future epoch—suggests that a measure of chance may indeed be woven into the very tapestry of reality, contrary to my deepest convictions. Nevertheless, I remain reluctant to relinquish my skepticism. If all occurrences were subject solely to chance, whence would come the harmony and order we perceive?

Albert Einstein took a sip of his tea.

Albert Einstein

Conversely, were everything inexorably determined, your arrival here would seem but a mirage, your agency reduced to that of a mere bystander. Between the extremes of unyielding determinism and unbridled randomness, I am compelled to suspect a subtler law at work, a principle my contemporaries and I caught only the faintest glimpse of, before the tumult of history intervened. Perhaps the ultimate truth is neither to deny the dice nor to accept them uncritically, but to seek the profound order governing their cast.

Kai

Oh, God plays dice, he just cheats because he has every fingerprint of every past throw!

Albert Einstein raised his right eyebrow.

Albert Einstein

Are you suggesting that the Almighty leaves traces of past states to determine his next moves?

Kai

That's right, Einstein! Just as I measure position and momentum separately, then bring them together to shape an outcome in space and time, so too doeth the Creator cross horizons through the cosmic record!

Einstein put his cup of black tea down and scratched his forehead.

Albert Einstein

That would elucidate memory as the hidden cause behind the probabilistic nature of the quantum realm!

Kai

And, to solidify that idea, memory isn't local in nature, but can still be measured at the dimensional interface, the boundary that interfaces with his fingerprints!

Albert grabs his collaborative book, flipping through it until he reaches a page that he taps with his index finger. The section is titled “How to Simulate a Universe”.

Albert Einstein

And this is why I had you fetch me this work. My colleagues and I were tapping into something deeper. If it weren't for the Nazis, we would have continued to dig deeper.

Albert flips to the blank pages of the book, grabs a fancy pen from inside his coat pocket, and writes on the first empty page.

Kai

Whatchya writing there, new friend?

Albert Einstein

If we had the time and resources, this work might have led us to envision a calculating engine — a mechanical record-keeper using punched tapes and statistical tables to replay stored states of the cosmos, step by step, allowing a model universe to evolve before our eyes so that by observing its course we might better understand our own.

Einstein sipped his tea, spilling a drop on his sweater. He wiped it with his hand. Kai ripped open a hole into a fast food restaurant in 2024 to grab some napkins near the drive-thru window. A young employee took notice and pulls her cell phone out to share the magical moment on social media. Kai handed the napkins to Einstein, who then wiped himself. Kai closed the portal as the worker's mouth dropped in shock.

Albert Einstein

That you can bypass causality is precisely why the importance of this book has resurfaced in my mind's outermost layers. I only wish I had recognized its significance sooner, rather than letting fate dictate the course of my work. But that does not matter now. What does is that you added memory to the equation, and that changes everything.

Kai sat down and poured himself a cup of black tea.

Kai

How so?

Albert Einstein

Think of position as sine, and momentum as cosine. When looking at the position, momentum is already encoded through Pythagorean identity. Momentum may appear hidden, but the position has memory of it. As sine multiplies through the theta angle, so too doeth the memory of momentum. You already exploit that to reshape space and time as you see fit. Why not shape a new one to utilize for your benefit?

Kai

Are you egging me on to create a new universe to fight my battles in this one?

Albert Einstein

We can use God's Manifesto to guide us through the process, and in turn, finish the work once and for all.

Kai stood up smiling while he ripped open a portal to the alien crash site in Ouray, Colorado.

Kai

Let me know when you come up with a game plan. I got to go and see if our interdimensional-shape-shifting friends have arrived.

He looked over at his family. Kai could see written all over Aaron's face that he had something to say.

Kai

If you have something to say, say it now. You may not get the chance later.

Aaron

I don't know how to express what I'm feeling. This experience has been a complete mindfuck. I don't know whether to be scared of you or to admit I do not have the capacity to understand you.

Kai shot a look at Einstein, both nodding in quiet agreement to utilize tactfulness and patience. He then returned his attention to Aaron.

Kai

Everything I've done in my life has been motivated by love for my family and humanity, Aaron. I know you may not see me that way, but it's the truth. I was the only child who escaped an abusive orthodox environment, allowing me to encounter diverse ideas early on. This experience taught me to control my own mind rather than let society dictate it. I understand your fear of what I represent. Your view of me will remain limited in one dimension until you're open to seeing the world through different looking-glasses.

Aaron exhaled softly, succumbing to a deep silence. Kai crossed the fourth dimension, meticulously ensuring he entered from a safe distance away from the crash site. He ascended the trail for an hour until he found himself a few thousand feet from the scene, where police tape cordoned off the way forward. Uncertainty gnawed at him: how would the Hagad choose to engage with Earth? Would they dispatch a cadre of scouts, or would they unleash an entire armada? Might they approach with strategic finesse, or would they instead surge forth, ravenous and indiscriminate?

With careful precision, Kai conjured a diminutive portal into the cave, a mere peephole into the unknown. He cautiously maneuvered the rift, scanning for any military presence. Within the cavern, he discerned the unsettling sight of a base meticulously established. The remnants of Zisser lay there, disturbing in his stillness. As Kai directed his portal upward, he observed a contingent of scientists engrossed in the study of the alien's techno-organic hybrid tentacles. As he remained poised on the trail, peering through the tear in the cosmic fabric, a chilling sound broke the stillness — a gun click resounded behind him.

Lieutenant Kowalsky

I have been waiting for you. Turn around — slowly!

Kai gradually rotated, shooting a dead stare at the Lieutenant.

Kai

I'm not the one you have to worry about, Lieutenant.

Lieutenant Kowalsky

The fuck you aren't! I know who you are! The whole goddamn country knows who you are! You are the messiah of the underworld! I'm only curious about what a self-hating fugitive is doing with a potentially dangerous extraterrestrial. I saw what you can do. No human possesses that type of power. I am led to believe you had an interaction with the alien. Give me one good reason why I shouldn't blow your brains out right now!

Kai

Because I am the only thing that stands in the way of interdimensional beings eating us out of all history.

Lieutenant Kowalsky held his aiming position for another five seconds before putting it away.

Lieutenant Kowalsky

Something tells me to trust you. However, you are still a fugitive who shot a cop, so I can't just let you go.

Kai

I don't think you grasp the gravity of the situation. The aliens are coming, and they will be here sooner rather than later. I am back here for a reason, Lieutenant. Do you want to be the reason why our species is deleted from history? As if all of our accomplishments never happened?

The Lieutenant stayed silent, waiting for Kai to continue.

Kai

We will have to work together to have a fighting chance. The good news is they aren't here yet, so we have time to coordinate.

Kai tore the peeping portal open enough to walk through it. He invitingly waved his hand for the Lieutenant to follow. After Lieutenant Kowalsky vouched for Kai, they got down to business. Kai revealed to them the rabbit holes he had created to hide people.

The plan ended up deviating and was now oriented at making entrances all over the planet to gather people into the safe havens. Other animals would have their own to inhabit. Regardless of Kai's feelings, the military didn't prioritize them over humans. He had no say over that. He understood the military had established boundaries and did not have the luxury of nitpicking, so he let the matter go.

Many individuals across the globe embraced the sanctuary with open arms. Yet, the majority remained in a state of disbelief, struggling to comprehend the proposition, and ultimately chose to decline the invitation. In a bid to galvanize greater support, Kai leveraged military connections to secure an appearance on international television. He ascended a stage in Washington, D.C., with the iconic Capitol building looming majestically behind him. Millions of eyes across the planet were riveted upon him in that very moment, capturing the attention of billions in real time.

Kai

My name is Kai Adleman, and for the last week, I've been hopping around the globe, attempting to gather everyone into the safe havens — the rabbit holes — to protect you from interdimensional predators. However, it seems that most are unwilling to face the dark reality. I can't stress enough the danger this alien species presents. Nothing we have ever experienced can compare to the nightmare awaiting us. Every monumental moment in our complex but great history is on the brink of deletion. As if it never happened — as if erasing the work of God!

Kai hesitated momentarily, surveying the myriad cameras and watchful eyes fixed upon him as he meticulously disentangled the very fabric of their realities.

Kai

To all those listening, you are just as valuable as the wealthiest person on the planet, each of you a potential story waiting to unfold. For the sake of what we can become, I plead with you, heed this message, and jump down the rabbit hole with me. If you're unable to, I will be there to assist, but to those who can, do not waste any more time. Our existential threat is on the horizon.

Kai tore through a cosmic boundary, bridging the realms of the Capitol stage and a military installation in Ouray. Anxiety coursed through him, heightened by the

foreboding sense that the Hagad had already arrived, poised in the shadows, awaiting their opportune moment to emerge.

Upon entering the chamber where Lieutenant Kowalsky and other high-ranking officials congregated, Kai positioned himself at a table, three seats removed from the President of the United States. He contemplated the incongruity of the President's presence, a figure barely able to recall his own name. Was it mere performative symbolism? The aides surrounding him certainly seemed to handle the substance of the discourse. In the grand scheme, it mattered little, but it struck Kai as peculiarly anomalous.

On the other side of the room, the television broadcasted an empty stage where Kai had just given his speech to the world, a silent image juxtaposed against the backdrop of a boisterous newsroom, where anchors discussed the unfolding narrative. In one corner of the screen, the desolate stage from which Kai had just departed lingered in stark contrast. A small group, engrossed in conversation around the TV, fell silent, their eyes drawn to the inexplicable sight of Kai standing before them, grappling with the surrealism of the moment.

A palpable uncertainty enveloped everyone present in the room; they seemed paralyzed, as though unfamiliar with the enormity of an existential crisis. An unspoken expectation hung in the air: they looked to Kai to guide them from this abyss. Leadership had never been his ambition; he had simply yearned to pursue what was right and true. Yet, having emerged from a life steeped in darkness, he had learned to see the world through different lenses, accepting the mantle of responsibility, aware that he could withstand trials that others might shy away from. Confronting his fears had been a lifelong endeavor, and this moment felt no different.

Minutes passed when a man wearing a brown and white striped sweater rushed in with a folder. He anxiously tossed it onto the table, and radiant images cascaded out, gliding gracefully across the glimmering surface. A presidential aide grabbed the shots and swiftly leafed through them, each one amplifying the fear evident in her gaze. She brought the photos to Kai and set them on the table before him. Thermal prints of what appeared to be hundreds of thousands of city-sized UAPs in Earth’s cislunar space sat in front of him.

Kai adjusted the photos to avoid the glare from the room's light. He took a moment to absorb the images in his mind. Looking up, he caught the President's gaze, which was filled with confusion. Kai scanned the room, observing everyone, before tearing open a portal to a rabbit hole meant for them.

Kai

I need everyone in this room to enter that rabbit hole.

No one moved for a moment until the President of the so-called free world stood up and straddled his way in. They all followed like sheep except for Lieutenant Kowalsky, who stood at the other end of the table.

Lieutenant Kowalsky

You may be running around here like God, but even God will need some help to stop the Devil's army.

Kai shut the rabbit hole entrance when no more bodies were crossing over. Lieutenant Kowalsky sat down across from Kai.

Lieutenant Kowalsky

Despite our political differences, we have become friends. I think it's time we go on a first-name basis. I'm James.

Kai

Everyone else jumped into the rabbit hole but you. Why?

James

Because I have eyes like yours.

Kai looked back down at the photos.

Kai

I'll create more rabbit holes with entrance points all around the globe. You'll be able to walk through them and lead people to safety. That way, the two of us can cover more ground quicker.

Kai immediately got to work. He built rabbit holes suitable for short-term living. He encapsulated entire buildings connected to pipelines and power systems with cosmic cleavages. Once enough structure allowed people to live comfortably in the rabbit holes, Kai and James gathered the masses.

Kai collected millions of people and other animals in every country in South America. He then went to the Middle East. Most people from Saudi Arabia, Iran, Jordan, and Lebanon were very cooperative. The Lebanese people seemed to be the most eager to jump down the rabbit hole since Israel's genocide was currently engulfing their country and blowing up little kids with pagers.

Kai knew he should not discriminate and gave the Israelis an opportunity to survive an even more significant existential threat to Earth than themselves. He received a lot of hateful words from random people in the crowd. He understood where their arrogance flowered from. It was centuries of intense trauma that forged this superiority complex. However, a new trauma lay waiting for all, and that could never be undone.

Kai

The Hagad aren't going to discriminate between Israelis and Palestinians. They do not care who God promised the land to. They will come here and eat all of you, both Palestinian and Israeli alike unless you work together! This moment is an opportunity for a fresh start as a species, and temporarily living in the rabbit holes together will give you both the time to work it out.

Israeli man 1

Bullshit. We all know who you are! You are that fucking cop-killing kapo!

Israeli man 2

God protects us! He gave us this land, and we will not be tricked into leaving it so you can then give it to the Palestinians!

The crowd roared in anger chanting “Am Yisrael Chai.” One young woman threw a water bottle at Kai. He dodged it with a cosmic catcher exiting above her. The water bottle hit her head instead.

Kai hoped that his enemies would come around and join him down the rabbit hole. He did not want them to die either, no matter how much pain and suffering they have caused the world. He wanted them to join him as brothers and sisters in the face of something greater.

Unable to break their resistance, Kai encapsulated the entire country in a portal pocket of a rabbit hole. He figured their resentment would eventually whiter away. After transferring large swaths of Israeli soldiers and aid-blocking civilians through cosmic holes out of Gaza and the West Bank, Kai protected the two concentration camps’ air space with large dome transdimensional portals. That way, if any Israelis attempted to continue to enter and cause trouble, they would just land inside the sewage canals of Tel Aviv. The point was to make it impossible for them to feed into their progressive pathology and start taking the time there in the rabbit hole to reflect on the mass death and destruction that they have caused for the last seventy-six years.

After the chaos of the Middle East, Kai found himself stepping into the vibrant streets of a city in Zimbabwe. The midday sun cast a golden glow over the bustling business district, where the air was thick with the aroma of grilled maize and spices hovering from nearby food stalls. Laughter and chatter filled the atmosphere, but there was an undercurrent of tension that prickled at Kai’s senses.

As he walked through the crowded sidewalk, he noticed a throng of people gathered frantically outside an electronic store. Their voices mingled, a clamor of anxious chatter punctuated by the occasional sharp intake of breath. Curious, Kai edged his way through the crowd, his pulse quickening as he felt the collective anxiety radiating from those around him.

Peering through the glass, he saw the muted flicker of images on the screens inside. The televisions, normally a source of entertainment, now displayed a horror that seemed to consume the very essence of the room. He felt a chill crawl up his spine as he portaled into the store, the shimmer of the gateway tinged with

urgency. With a flick of his wrist, he turned a television around, the screen lighting up his face as it unveiled disturbing cell phone videos.

On the screen, chaotic snippets depicted the Hagad, those monstrous creatures that he was warned about, mercilessly preying on the unsuspecting citizens of Ouray. The air in the store turned heavy with dread as the grim news unfolded: Ouray had become the epicenter of terror, and within moments, video clips from neighboring towns began to flash a flesh feeding frenzy across the screen. The news switched over to other places around the world, exposing the nightmare unfolding. Panic surged through Kai as more reports poured in, each update more chilling than the last.

Then, abruptly, a rising wave of fear rippled through the crowd outside. Kai's ears perked up at the unmistakable sounds of alarm, a rising crescendo of panicked voices, and the thud of hurried footsteps on pavement. Driven by instinct, he stepped outside, where the sky had taken on a foreboding shade of gray, overshadowing the buzzing streets below.

His heart raced as he looked up, breath hitching in his throat. A Hagad ship loomed ominously against the swirling clouds, its shadow casting an eerie pall over the city. The air grew still, heavy with anticipation, as if the world was choking. Kai's mind raced. He opened a cosmic gateway behind him, before the threatening presence could descend upon them all.

Kai

Come this way — NOW!

Kai shouted at the crowd while signaling to hurry into the rabbit hole. He didn't expect them to understand his language, but his gestures and the fact that an extraterrestrial ship was above them made the message clear to jump into it. Everyone in the crowd went through the portal. Kai closed it off. He then closed all the temporary worldwide entrances into the rabbit holes. Kai stood frozen in the middle of the road in a place he had never been. The moment had finally arrived, and he did not know what to do.

The Hagad began exiting the ship and floating down to the city. Within minutes, Kai could hear the bellowing sounds of the Hagad making their way further in.

Kai also heard young children and women howling in agony and terror in the distance. As the Hagad approached Kai, he could hear the sound of bones crunching on top of the screams. The Hagad were not too far away at this point.

Kai was breathing fast, attempting not to hyperventilate. His palms were drenched in sweat, shaking in fear. Then, the moment struck. At least ten Hagad spotted Kai, the only living being in the area. They all competed for him.

Chapter 7 - God's Manifesto

Kai shut his eyes, drew in a deep breath, and unleashed a piercing scream, heart racing as he braced for the moment when his hands would become conduits of unimaginable power. And then it happened. They morphed into a myriad of forms, manifested through a captivating interplay of the shifting spectrum of speed-altered light. This transformation enabled Kai to harness the forces of nature itself, channeling the energy of black holes to intricately unweave the temporospatial threads that bound the heads of the Hagad, just as he had previously done with Zisser.

The severed pieces of the interdimensional cephalopods fell to the ground, bleeding out against the resistance of the lower dimension. Kai struck the cosmic strings to play an open tune through the fourth dimension and ran through it to his apartment in New York. He then peeked through another spacetime window high up in Earth's atmosphere, where there was enough oxygen to breathe. Kai proceeded to surveil several other aerial views around the globe. He moved the peepholes around to spot as many alien ships as possible. The most populated area dealing with the most damage from all the places Kai saw was Animal Kingdom in central Florida.

He shut all the other cosmic windows and jumped to the variety-filled theme park where the Hagad were choking elephants left and right. Other Hagad were ripping the skulls off of orangutans and sucking their brains out. Human toddlers were being torn in half by Hagad fighting over ownership. Kai saw the Hagad do the same to the adults. One Hagad had jumped in the water and took a bite out of one of the dolphins. Another dolphin attempted to rape the Hagad but ended up being dinner instead.

A growing number of humans and other animals fought over hiding spots, some humans even attempting to hide behind giraffes and large tortoises. Many believed they could find refuge in caves and observatories, but the Hagad found their way into those places and devoured them all as well. The number of sanctuaries was lessening, creating further panic among all the animals, especially the humans.

Kai closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Once he regained control of himself, he opened them, hyper-handed, and sliced several thousand Hagad into bloody shreds within a half-hour span. More of them found their way into the park, dining on the plump people and other appetizing animals. Kai noticed the breach, irritating him to double down and butcher all the slithering infiltrators. When he finished painting the oasis red, he took a shortcut through the fourth dimension to the surrounding three-dimensional areas outside the park.

Kai devoted the entirety of his day to combating the relentless onslaught of the Hagad. He contemplated the daunting notion that an end was not readily foreseeable in the near future. This grim realization weighed heavily upon him; he understood that such ceaseless struggle would be the arduous reality for the world in the days to come. A profound discontent settled within him, casting a shadow over his spirit.

Before returning to war, Kai hid for the night to gain a few hours of sleep. He ate quickly before slicing open an entrance and running off to battle again. Kai was cutting the faces off of Hagad for days when the realization came to him that he was going to need a new approach that could keep up with the rate of death on his planet.

As Kai contemplated the staggering toll of lives lost, which he estimated to be in the billions, he realized that merely severing the visages of ten, a hundred, or even a thousand Hagad at once would scarcely suffice to stem the tide. He needed to devise a method for conjuring a one-way interactive universe, a strategic asset in this relentless struggle for survival. With determination, Kai tore open a portal to the rabbit hole that housed Einstein and his entire family. Anxious gazes met his as the celestial gateway sealed shut behind him. It had been over two weeks since his last appearance, and he now navigated the disconcerting gap of information that had emerged in his absence, absorbing the pervasive climate of fear, uncertainty, and frustration that encompassed them.

Kai noticed his biological father’s intense beads of sweat dripping down his shivering body. The trembling hands were the most noticeable. Kai looked up into his sperm donor’s eyes and realized he was craving the death grip of alcohol.

Kai

As much as I hate you, I hate to see you like this even more, Eugene.

Eugene

I'm your father. Don't call me by my first name.

Kai

You lost the right to be called father the first time you wished death upon me. I still allowed you in my life even after the second time you wished death upon me. If it weren't for the dire predicament our planet was facing, I would not be talking to you after the third time you wished death upon me. I am not your son. Judd and Sandra are my real parents. They raised me and took good care of me. I am an Adleman now, not an Itzkowitz anymore! I haven't been since I got adopted at age twelve!

Eugene

If you had just behaved as a child, your mother wouldn't have needed to hit you, and we would still be together. You destroyed our family, Kai!

Kai

Nice. Blame the five-year-old whose mother gave him two black and blue eyes with a metal bucket all because she wasn't intelligent enough to deal with the needs of a child. Great.

Dev

It was only one black and blue eye, Kai! You're a liar!

Kai

I'm the one who had to look in the mirror every day for six months, you stupid cunt!

Dev reacted, hysterically crying. Einstein placed his hand on Kai's left shoulder, neural coupling a silent but meaningful message. It unlocked Kai's deeper agencies, enabling him to face the physicist with a fiery visage, highlighting a bulging bifurcated vein that pulsated from the middle of his forehead. His eyes glared like the light of active supernovae exploding into the vacuum of space. Kai stared at himself in the windows of Einstein's soul. The mirror reflected his

message, effectively changing the tune of the dance between positive and negative geometry, slowing Kai's hyperventilation, and taking command of his own breath. He closed his eyes to help further desensitize. Within ten seconds, he reopened them.

Dev

IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT, KAI! YOU DESTROYED OUR FAMILY! HOW DARE YOU CALL ME A CUNT, YOU PIECE OF NASTY SHIT FACE! YOUR WHOLE FAMILY HATES YOU! YOU WILL NEVER-

Kai cleaved an outlet below him and Einstein, both falling through it. They landed on a king-sized mattress in another rabbit hole. Kai closed the portal above them in the middle of his oldest sister's sentence.

Kai

Finally, some privacy. I actually came back for you.

Einstein gazed around at the artwork floating in the endless space of the new rabbit hole. He and Kai slid off the bed and stood up. Following Kai, Einstein walked towards a refrigerator. As they got closer, he noticed more artwork he hadn't seen from his sitting position on the bed. The backs of each portal were facing him so that all Einstein could see were the boundaries of the rabbit hole in front of each one, not the artwork itself. Kai opened the fridge, retrieved two plastic-bottled waters, and handed one to Einstein. After twisting off his cap, Einstein mimicked Kai.

Kai

It's getting pretty intense out there.

Kai sipped his water.

Albert Einstein

To what extent does this situation deviate from an ideal state?

Kai

You can barely see daylight because there are so many of them. I know how to kill them, but as soon as I do, more fill their place. I need the space and time to think and talk it out with someone.

They walked over to the couch.

Kai

I was thinking about what you said. I've searched the files of my higher brain and keep coming across something referred to me as the White Space. It seems like the answer to coding a new universe lies there.

Einstein sipped his water before they both sat down.

Albert Einstein

What exactly is the White Space?

Kai

It's an infinite gradient representing the dimensionless point of anything and everything, including our universe and all other universes. To describe it within the framework of your three-dimensional mind, I must call it a space, but it isn't really one, let alone white, even though the human mind can only perceive it as boundless white.

Albert Einstein

Is this "infinite gradient" the source of your abilities?

Kai

It is. The White Space nonlocally reprogrammed me through layers of quantified fields as a sort of four-dimensional cosmic supercomputer.

Albert Einstein

I am perplexed by your use of the term 'quantified fields.' Would you care to explain them to me?

Kai

What quantum field theory calls 'flat gaps'—those discontinuities where energy seems to vanish—and what general relativity reads as smooth, unbroken curvature, aren't opposites at all. They're two descriptions of the same thing: horizons as dimensional interfaces, where curvature, resistance, and memory of past states shape what we call the present. Imagine being able to manipulate the differential tension across those horizons, each one storing a complete record of the universe's prior conditions. All I have to do is rebalance the cosmic equations—let the curvature-memory feedback reconfigure the effective metric itself—until spacetime ripples open into entangled geometric corridors.

Albert Einstein

And The White Space is the total "interface" of all records?

Kai

Exactly. I embody the mind of God when I break universal laws. The problem comes when I attempt to write new laws.

Albert Einstein's eyes widened as he slapped his forehead in amazement.

Kai

I've seen each layer properly scripted when I play it out in my mind, but yet, on the whole, it doesn't manage the program exactly the way it's supposed to.

Albert Einstein

Have you considered rearranging these fields to produce a different result?

Kai froze in a long silence, rubbing his chin, deep in thought.

Kai

I have been so tunneled into the fine details that I had not considered the possibility of appropriately rearranging some of the scripting. I would have to go back and rewrite lines of code, but in theory, I could reorder it. I am worried that this may cause irrevocable damage to our reality if not done correctly.

Albert Einstein

Your concern is both valid and profound. The interplay of reality's fabric is indeed delicate, and any action we take can resonate far beyond our immediate understanding. However, it is important to recognize that science thrives on exploration and the willingness to confront uncertainty. While caution is necessary, we must also embrace our curiosity and the potential for discovery. Meticulous thought and rigorous testing can guide us, but we must remain open to the complexities of the Universe. In the pursuit of knowledge, we learn not only to fear the consequences but also to understand and manage them wisely.

Kai nodded as he sipped his water.

Kai

Duly noted.

He capped his water and placed it down on the coffee table in front of him and Einstein.

Albert Einstein

I am quite curious to delve deeper into the underlying principles that govern your capabilities.

Kai

While I can sense higher spaces and times to some degree when my consciousness is focused into three dimensions, I can only tap into them when I go into hyper-mode.

Kai hyper-handed, the light slowing around his fingertips, shifting into vibrant hues of blues morphing into violent violets that melted into a dead red.

Kai

Think of interfaces as relationships between two dimensions. Each communicates with the other through stored memory, the way both sides of a paper share its tension. When you grasp the sheet, each side reacts to the other's pull, allowing you to fold it into new forms. In the same way, I can sense and reshape the coupled tension between dimensions — bending the fabric of reality where its memory yields.

He maneuvered his hands apart as if ripping paper, which opened the fourth dimension, exposing a two-dimensional cosmic window of the other three-dimensional side where Michelangelo Buonarroti was painting God into the picture on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City in the year 1511.

Kai

The White Space processed me to have an outsider's point of view of three-dimensional spacetime. I can reorder the first three directions of the fabric to fold and rip open through the fourth continuum by changing my higher brain's perception angle.

Albert Einstein

In what ways do these complex paths relate to the basic principles of mechanics?

Michelangelo curiously began to turn his head upon hearing the foreign tune of Albert and Kai, but the angelic aperture shut before he could capture his next artistic vision.

Kai

The rabbit holes are folded less than the two-dimensional portals you see me jump through. The less of a fold through higher space and time, the more of a tunnel to travel through in lower space and time.

Albert Einstein

How do you harness the energy necessary to create a distortion in the very fabric of the universe?

Kai

I don't harness energy — I redistribute tension. Every horizon holds a differential between what it remembers and what it can yet become. I align those tensions through curvature equations written in light, letting space fold itself where the imbalance peaks.

Albert Einstein

Then you don't harness energy at all — you let it equalize through you.

Kai

Exactly. The field does the work. I just write the balance into its memory.

Albert Einstein

Dare I ask for a further explanation?

Both widely grin.

Kai

There are field gradients that work to equalize tension across every scale of existence, and the regions we call black holes are simply the steepest slopes in that continuum — anchors where curvature and memory converge. By adjusting the coupling between these gradients, I trigger a cascading re-equilibration of the field itself. It's not domination, but resonance — local coherences that let nearby horizons merge for an instant, bending and rethreading spacetime across both the micro and the cosmic scales.

Kai looked down at his multi-portal bracelet as the sounds of Hagad feasting on his planet's life growled louder. He witnessed a preschool full of toddlers and teachers ingested on the other side of his bracelet.

Kai

I'd like to stay and dig deeper down this rabbit hole, but it's time for me to play God, Einstein.

Einstein cautiously stepped back. Kai searched his hyper-brain for any file related to quantum fluctuations to reorder and build the field subequations for the final execution of a newly created parallel universe. He then formulated a sub-subequation to create a one-way portal from his new universe to his baseverse. Before opening the door, he needed a story that would play out as a domino effect.

Kai hyper-handed. Within a few seconds, all his bluish-purplish-reddish infinite hands veered into shadows. An intensifying light began to encompass him. Everything, including Einstein, faded into the white light.

And so began the story of the Ganjans. Since the human mind cannot understand this universe that Kai created, it has been converted and simplified

into three-dimensional events to communicate what unfolded. The product of this conversion is the Ganjans, a one-way interactive transuniversal species that solved the great puzzle of their existence.

The challenge created the relationship Kai was looking for with them. If the Ganjans could work together instead of against each other to solve the mystery of their existence, they would be ready to fight alongside their creator to stop the Hagad. The Ganjans would convert into three-dimensional forms suspended in four dimensions when crossing the portal borders into their god's universe.

They appeared as creatures twice the size of the Hagad and were greater in number. Their appendages were plasma-like and could become more dense upon command and shape into whatever structure they saw fit for use. One advantage of these appendages was that they could split off from the whole body and become their own conscious agent with shape-shifting appendages of their own. Their peripherals could also loosen up and seep through anything in Kai's world.

The most significant benefit was that nothing in Kai's universe could touch them, not even the Hagad, who were ruled by laws of physics much more similar to those of Earth's living creatures. The Ganjans, upon will, could create micro ripples within the three-dimensional fabric of Kai's universe their higher selves were born into that could then push the objects around it as if touching them. Kai created the Ganjans to be able to tap into his universe's binary basics of the virtual pairing particle system itself to turn their physical forms off and on simultaneously. This created a perpetual state of potential outcomes that only manifested into a focused position upon the Ganjan's will.

Kai guided his creations through their journey of self-discovery by manifesting his consciousness in certain Ganjans who acted as messengers for their creator. Throughout much of their history, the Ganjans ignored the messengers or murdered them. The puzzle had no meaning to this transuniversal species for what equated to a long time in their universe. Then, one curious Ganjan, Ipitoor Xeevnonan, decided to figure out what the mysterious puzzle wanted from the Ganjans. They all heard the call. They had messengers to help decipher it, but it was not until Ipitoor came along that the path of the Ganjan species changed towards completing their whole existence into Kai's universe.

Ipitoor never gave up on solving the puzzle. Ipitoor's persistence and minor successes influenced others to join Ipitoor and solve the puzzle of their existence. The more Ganjans that helped, the more likely they were to solve it. Once all the Ganjans had joined the movement, the key had turned, and the doorway to their creator's universe was opened for them to pulsate their way into.

Kai created a unique rabbit hole for them to all collect into and use as a command center. The Ganjans could rip open portals to where they needed to go in spacetime. They were all connected to Kai to keep in communication with him, and they all shared the same motive of saving Earth's living creatures from the Hagad of Feruz.

Kai was ready to face the time deleters, opening a portal with a sextillion of Ganjans behind him. He stepped into a bloody mess with no living being in sight. Kai had his army scour the entire planet for life, including the blood-filled deep oceans, but the Ganjans found no trace. It had dawned on him that the Hagad finished everything there was to eat on the planet and went back in time to eat more.

He found them feeding on the moments before their past selves began their global feast on Earth. Their new artificial pasts synchronized to the new timeline that they tabled themselves at. Each jump through spacetime forced Kai to recalibrate reality itself. But his mind could only hold so many equations before space and time fought back. For now, he was able to continue to chase the time deleters.

Kai and his forces promptly commenced countless ways of slaughtering Hagad, employing an array of innovative methods. Many Ganjans enjoyed tearing the Hagad from the inside until each atom was completely separate and far enough away from each other to carry any function. Other Ganjans found joy in chewing out the intricate connections between each brain, torturing their victims slowly, driving them to madness before being released to the sweet embrace of death. As Kai and the Ganjans made their way forward in time, they stumbled across several incidences where some of the Hagad were gatewaying elsewhere. It turned out that the damage to the unwelcomed newcomers by Kai and the

Ganjans had become so great that it shook the cephalopod's central command to its core.

The cephalopodic creatures decided to utilize game theory and split ground. On one end was the presentpoint where most Hagad continued to feast. On the other end were splitline pastpoints where other Hagad veered off to feed, creating reverse ripples, temporal shockwaves moving backward through causality. These ripples held the potential to snap back violently, unraveling the freshly fractaled timeline before the Hagad could even begin their ancient appetizers. To counter this, the aliens deployed additional splitlines at mathematically strategic intervals, diffusing ripple pressure, rerouting collapse vectors, and preserving the delicate asymmetry of the timeline's artificial bloom. Kai found out about them when a team of Ganjans reported that they jumped into one of the Hagad's portals, witnessing them eat what appeared to be more primitive forms of human existence. He interpreted the location to be Earth's distant past. Though Kai commanded a formidable array of warriors capable of traversing spacetime with similar ease, the expanse before him loomed vast, particularly if the timelines should fracture. Did he possess the vigor necessary to confront the Hagad throughout the convoluting fabric of the multiverse? At what juncture does the struggle lose its significance?

Kai harbored no desire to pursue the Hagad across the countless splitting epochs of history. His legion was only aware of a singular moment in time where the Hagad, alongside a faction of the Ganjans, had ventured. The pathways leading to the other reported openings of portals remained shrouded in mystery.

For the first time in a long time, Kai found himself engulfed by an intense sense of disorientation. He yearned for the elusive currency of time, a span that slipped through his fingers, to reflect on the profound implications of the revelations he had unearthed. With a surge of urgent resolve, he forcefully wrenched open a portal and plunged into his family's rabbit hole, Albert Einstein being present as well.

As he surveyed the gathering of familiar faces, the weight of his emotions overcame him, and he collapsed to the ground, tears streaming down his cheeks. His adoptive parents and Einstein approached, their expressions filled with compassion as they sought to comfort him. Looking up, Kai met the warm gazes

of his chosen parents, whose gentle smiles offered him solace. His mother enveloped him in the most deep embrace she had ever bestowed upon him, a testament to their unwavering love.

Sandra

Kai, I know you had to make hard choices in your life. Some of them took time for me and your father to understand, but deep down, we always knew you did things for what you thought were the right reasons. We never doubted that about you. At times, you felt lost in the dark, but we knew, like with everything else, you would find a way back to the light. Whatever that light is, you seem to understand it better than anyone else, so much so that you could even find it in the darkest places. You always had eyes for these things. Don't let one issue keep you down. Have they ever?

Kai chuckled softly at her inquiry, fully aware of the truth underlying her words. He returned her embrace, and they all rose to their feet. As Kai brushed away his tears, he caught sight of his biological father, whose face glistened with perspiration, beads of sweat trickling from the tips of his beard and along his receding hairline, exuding an air heavy with the scent of cigarettes and stale beer.

He was acutely aware that Eugene was on the verge of voicing something, as he always had a penchant for theatrical proclamations. Whenever the opportunity for self-aggrandizement arose, Eugene would regale listeners with tales from his tenure in the Zionist militant organization, the Jewish Defense League. Kai harbored a deep-seated resentment towards the myriad acts of racial aggression in which his biological father had been complicit during Kai's formative years. It was precisely this involvement that had transformed his father into a fugitive in the United States, compelling him to seek refuge in Israel. Eugene possessed the unsettling knowledge that among his own people, he would find sanctuary, shielded from any extradition to the homeland where he had fought fervently in the name of Zionism.

Kai maintained a tenuous relationship with his biological father up until his abrupt departure from the country. Prior to Eugene severing their visits, the state had permitted some degree of in-person contact while Kai was in foster care. When these visits were suddenly terminated, Kai learned from his biological mother of

Eugene’s circumstances. She disclosed that he had assaulted an American Palestinian protesting against Israel’s occupation, and without delay, Eugene had boarded the first flight to Israel that he could obtain.

The familiar glint in Eugene's eyes preceded the customary preamble to his insipid monologues, a gaze imbued with the desire for attention. With a self-satisfied grin splitting his lips, he prepared to speak, but Kai, weary of his father’s tiresome bravado, decisively shoved Eugene's head into a portal, its exit positioned precariously high upon Mount Everest. Eugene emerged from the aperture, his sparse hair and thick white beard festooned with glistening icicles. He briskly ducked out of the portal and fell into an uncharacteristic silence for the remainder of Kai's visit.

Kai felt a profound sense of mental equilibrium return, ready to lead his cosmic legion into the fray once more. He understood that each confrontation must be approached with unwavering resolve, confronting each challenge one at a time, even if it meant facing them for eternity. This, he recognized, was his newfound purpose.

Chapter 8 - Reverse Rabbit Holes

On a balmy evening of June 30th, 1984, the scene outside Club Rio was electric, pulsing with the vibrant energy of the times. Neon lights flickered overhead, casting a display of colors on a throng of elegantly dressed patrons, each one a vivid splash of flair typical of the era — shoulder pads, bold prints, and teased hair that reached for the stars. The air was thick with the promise of the night, where laughter and synth-driven music harmonized with the intoxicating aroma of high-end spirits.

The crowd swayed to an unseen beat, fueled by the excitement of a new decade brimming with possibilities. Fashion statements echoed the boldness of the '80s, and camaraderie reflected in laughter, while the latest hits from Prince and Madonna played through the venue's walls. This was more than just an evening; it was a gathering of vibrant souls dressed to the nines, eager to indulge in the richness of life, ready to lose themselves in rhythm and revelry, swept away by the exhilarating current of a culture bursting with creativity and excess.

As the fashionistas, dappers, and yuppies twirled and sipped beneath a cascade of dazzling dancing lights, a transdimensional rift materialized on the club floor, unleashing a torrent of over fifty Hagad who surged forth like a tempestuous train. With an air of steady confidence, they embraced the night’s allure, promptly orchestrating the culinary symphony that would unfold. They chomped away at the crowd, tore limbs off, and squished heads before sucking on the blood-squirting neck-holes on finely dressed sacks of juicy meat.

As the gateway was shimmering shut, Kai and ten Ganjans leaped through it, bursting into action. Within two minutes, they had slaughtered half of the Hagad troops. In a desperate bid, one Hagad opened another portal, allowing him and his comrades to escape, with only one Ganjan who managed to join them.

Kai had left most of the Ganjans on the baseline to fight the Hagad. He also assembled teams to locate the points throughout spacetime where the Hagad had traveled. Kai took it upon himself to nip the time gappers in the bud so as not to take a chance and let it get out of hand more than it already had. On June 30th, 1984, Club Rio was the second place he and his team traveled to after the Hagad targeted Time Square on December 31st, 1999. Now, here he was, waiting to get communication back from the Ganjan, who successfully passed through the portal before it closed in the dance establishment.

Within moments, the Ganjan sent a message to Kai. With a swift motion, Kai tore open a portal to August 18th, 1969, in Bethel, New York, on Max Yasgur's dairy farm. Raindrops fell steadily from a gray sky, creating a shimmering curtain over the festival grounds. The crowd, still large but wavering in the downpour, huddled under makeshift tarps and ponchos, their spirits undampened. Jimi Hendrix stood drenched on stage, playing a haunting rendition of the Star Spangled Banner, the sound mingling with the rhythmic patter of rain as he captivated the trip-waning audience, a sea of soaked but passionate souls who had journeyed from distant places to be part of the iconic Woodstock music festival. The crowd had slowly taken notice of the intensifying screams reverberating from the far edges of the collective. The cheering quickly faded within minutes, and the singing of Jimi’s white guitar became mute.

Jimi Hendrix
What the fuck?

One Hagad pivoted toward the stage swiftly slithering with an unsettling grace. With each furtive movement, it wound its way forward, a specter of intent, the air thick with anticipation and an unspoken dread. The stage loomed ahead, a backdrop of uncertainty, waiting to witness the dark ballet that was about to unfold. Jimi dropped his guitar to the floor and ran. The Hagad was rapidly catching up to him when a coronal-angled portal sliced open the Hagad’s head and slid his severed face through the other side of the cosmic cavity. Kai and his

team jumped through it as the Hagad's body fell to the stage floor and slid across it. He noticed Jimi was still running for his life. Kai ordered a couple of Ganjans to keep the guitar god safe while he and the other Ganjans took care of the Hagad.

The two Ganjans followed their order while Kai and the rest of the team battled the time gappers. By depolarizing two-dimensional endpoints, Kai created reverse rabbit holes that used the negative pressure of the collapsing interspace to crush the Hagad, turning them into tiny black holes. After Kai and the Ganjans annihilated the final ravenous predators out of existence, he and his team returned to the Ganjan command center, where Albert and James had relocated. Kai closed the portal from the first Woodstock event behind him and walked up to James.

Kai

Any news on the locations of the other time gappers?

James

As you instructed, we created semi-device-independent entanglement copies of nonorganic objects with unique package-ending identifiers. When one set of identifiers didn't match up with an entangled copy, we were able to trace several locations the Hagad had traveled to. We are still working on finding the other places.

Kai

Which one has the highest priority?

James

There is a man named Hans Schmidt that the math leads back to. He birthed a line of people that led up to the person who invented something called the microwave oven. It's similar to a miniwave, except it doesn't use a turning cover and was not invented by Jimmy Turner, whose toffee candy had melted in his pocket after standing in front of a magnetron at his job in Raytheon, giving him the idea that led us to nuking burritos in the miniwave. He got the job instead of Percy Spencer since Percy Spencer never existed on this new timeline.

Kai

So, what happened to Hans Schmidt?

James

We believe he was recently consumed because we lost the original copy of the device this morning. If our calculations are correct, he most likely would have birthed several hundred million people whom the Hagad deleted from history.

Kai

When and where am I traveling to?

James

You will start in Frankfurt, Germany, at the beginning of 1204 and work backward.

Kai looked over at Einstein.

Kai

How's my family holding up?

Albert Einstein

Given the circumstances, they are holding up well.

Kai nodded to gesture acknowledgment.

Kai

I'm headed out now for the next assignment. Message me if you guys need anything.

Both James and Albert nodded. Kai ripped open a glistening portal, the air buzzing with energy as he and hundreds of Ganjans leaped into the heart of 1204 Frankfurt, Germany. They landed on a rugged hill, the ground slick with rain and the scent of wet earth teaming with the smoky aroma of wood-burning fires from nearby homes. Dark clouds roiled above, and an intense thunderstorm crashed around them, sending raindrops cascading like jewels onto the thatched roofs of quaint timber-framed houses nestled in the valley below.

As bolts of lightning streaked across the sky, illuminating the cobblestone streets, Kai opened cosmic windows around the city, his eyes scanning for any sign of

the time-gapping Hagad. The vibrant hues of Frankfurt's autumn were lost in the storm’s embrace; the crisp scent of fallen leaves and damp stone filled the air. But despite his efforts, the only clues were bloody shoes, uneaten stews, and the sound of dead silence emerging from the swirling chaos of decelerating poop-leaking guts and brain-scattered cuts around and above him, hanging and dangling from the corners of the now soulless timber-framed houses.

Frustrated but determined, Kai and the Ganjans jumped back to the previous day, the familiar thunder echoing in their ears. They returned again and again, day after day, until at last, they reached a moment in the autumn of the past year. The landscape had transformed; the wooden homes now weathered and adorned with autumnal wreaths, smoke curling from chimneys, and the pungent smell of roasted chestnuts wafted through the damp air.

As they watched from the shadows, a fierce feud erupted among the townspeople, their voices rising in a desperate bluster. Kai's heart raced as he remembered the importance of preserving history. But then, with a suddenness that chilled the air, the Hagad emerged like dark phantoms, their grotesque forms slithering toward the panicked villagers. The sweet earthiness of the baked bread from the market mingled hauntingly with the scent of fear.

Kai couldn't stand idly by. In a surge of resolve, he stepped into the fray, channeling his powers as he unleashed a wave of energy that squished and transformed thousands of the Hagad into microscopic black holes, their shrieks echoing eerily before vanishing into the nothingness of a reverse rabbit hole. With a combined might, the Ganjans swarmed in, finishing off the last of the dark creatures, restoring a fragile peace to the blood-soaked streets of Frankfurt, where the faint aroma of victory was beginning to replace the lingering terror.

Kai felt that the tides were turning. He was confident that with Einstein’s help in developing a way to trace the Hagad through the semi-device-independent entanglement copies of varying objects, there was a chance at winning the historical war. And so Kai and the Ganjans kept crusading against the time gappers, crunching them into the abyss of atomic-sized blackholes forever lost within the reverse rabbit holes.

The next mission took Kai and the Ganjans to the mountains of Mongolia. The hunt for the Hagad took place deep in the forests, a village full of people gone. The Hagad destroyed homes, devouring the horrified families inside. As the full moon hung like a radiant blood pearl on the edge of the Altai Mountains, the year 1178 unfolded beneath its red glow. The night air shimmered with the whispers of the forest, a concert of chaos harmonizing in the stillness when Kai and the Ganjans arrived. The leaves rustled gently, swaying to the rhythmic pulse of a distant river, while the soft calls of owls echoed like secrets exchanged among ancient spirits.

As Kai and the Ganjans journeyed this ancient realm, the gentle rustle of underbrush accompanied their movements, while the hoots of owls continued to punctuate the night, watching with wide, unblinking eyes. The air felt electric, charged with the thrill of their mission and underscored by the faint, bittersweet scent of decay that lingered where homes once stood, now nothing but shadows and memories.

Beneath the moonlight, the rich aroma of damp earth consorted with the fragrant dance of wild sage and blooming night jasmine, each breath a reminder of the vibrant life that pulsed around. The warm scent of pine needles released their essence towards the starry abyss, inviting the world to awaken.

From the shadows, a chorus of crickets serenaded the night, their chirps weaving through the air, enhancing the melodious rustle of fur and feather. A deer, cautious but curious, stepped lightly on the carpet of fallen leaves, their scent mingling with that of the forest's fertile loam. A furtive fox dashed through the underbrush, its coat glistening like embers as it chased unseen phantoms of the night.

Yet, amidst this enchanting tableau, a shadow lurked, the semi-device-independent entanglement original copy of the umbrella was woven into the very fabric of this world. Once an invention of great purpose and protection, it was now expunged from the annals of humanity, leaving behind echoes of a lineage formed by billions. The ruthless Hagad had erased a thread woven over centuries, effectively eradicating an entire timeline shaped by humanity. This act of deletion highlighted the terrifying capability of the

cephalopodic interdimensional beings to devour not just individuals, but whole existences and histories.

Deeper into the heart of the forest, they followed the whispers of the wind, which carried tales of a people that had vanished, leaving only memories in its wake. The Hagad, relentless and predatory, had wreaked chaos, their horrifying feasts resonating faintly in the rustle of leaves; each crack of a twig underfoot echoed the shifting dread of families consumed.

Kai's resolve hardened as they pursued the malevolent echoes of the Hagad, obliterating each one that dared invade this timeline. The forest quivered with the remnants of their struggle as the bright flashes of energy erupted, illuminating the darkened trunks and casting eerie shadows that drifted like ghosts in the night. Hagad guts danced through the midnight air as Kai and the Ganjans shredded them like cloths.

Just as Kai and the Ganjans crushed the last of the Hagad into dimensionless points, Einstein's voice surged through Kai's portal bracelet communicator, urging them back to central command. The intensity of Albert's tone pierced through him, so Kai quickly pulled open the seams of the fourth dimension to travel back to the future. With a final glance at the moonlit war-torn forest, they stepped through, leaving behind the haunted woods, and emerged back into the familiar confines of their base. Kai strode towards Albert, determination reflected in his eyes, ready to face whatever awaited them next.

Kai

What's going on, AI?

Albert Einstein

Several Ganjans fighting on the baseline have had multiple failed attacks on them by something that did not resemble the Hagad.

Kai

What do you mean? Are other aliens attacking us now, too?

Albert activated a button on the communications console, bringing forth a recording he had commissioned from one of the Ganjans. Intrigued by prior

reports of unsettling incidents involving these beings, he felt compelled to investigate further. The footage unveiled a creature of constantly morphing form, its features elusive and ill-defined, as though it were perpetually moving in a series of still frames. In what appeared to be a prelude to an assault, the animated fragmented shapeshifter vanished into thin air. Subsequently, Albert examined a plethora of recordings showcasing various other creatures, each possessing unique attributes, all striving, and ultimately failing to establish contact with the Ganjans.

Albert Einstein

It seems we haven't lost any Ganjans yet, which is a relief. But I can't shake the feeling that someone, or something, is out there trying to figure out how to put a stop to you. It's only a matter of time before they uncover the mystery behind your unique creations that allow for interactions across different universes.

Hours later, Kai gazed out over the desolate expanse of the ruined White House roof, its once-proud structure now a husk of crumbling stone and rusting metal. The evening air carried a slight chill, wrapping around him like a haunting shroud as he took a deep drag from the cannabis-rolled joint in his fingers. Wisps of smoke danced into the cool twilight, mingling with the faint scent of damp earth and decaying bodies that lingered in the atmosphere.

The skyline was silhouetted against the fading light, with remnants of skyscrapers standing like broken teeth amidst the debris. Monuments that had once been the pride of the nation lay half-collapsed, their grandeur now tarnished by the scars of conflict. Shattered glass glinted like ice on the ground, a stark reminder of the chaos that had unfolded. The air felt heavy with an eerie stillness, punctuated only by the distant echo of the Ganjans' fierce struggle, the low rumble of their determination resonating in his chest.

As he settled into the moment, Kai allowed himself to reflect on Albert's words. The weight of countless sleepless nights, the battles fought to protect not just Earth's history, but its very future, pressed on his shoulders like a heavy cloak. Here on this desolate rooftop, with no humans in sight, he felt a flicker of peace. The glow of the smoldering joint illuminated his face as the taste of East Coast

Jungle Cheese, a marvelous hybrid strain of vivid candy fruit undertones patched with a poignant zest, retrohaled from mouth to nose. For a brief moment, he surrendered to the solitude and the fleeting whispers of a world reclaimed by nature.

He was halfway through his joint when he fell through a portal and landed on his back in the cave where Zisser laid dead with a noxious smell. Kai anxiously searched the place for clues that may explain what brought him there. And then he spotted her. Oolra.

Before he could blink, she snapped one of her tentacles at Kai and picked him up by his left ankle. He attempted to rip her face off with a portal, but he quickly realized his hands were not able to move. He noticed Oolra's head flashing multiple colors like Zisser did when he learned how to communicate with Kai, but this time with her, it felt different. The pattern and speed were different. It was Oolra tapping into Kai's mind and controlling his body to prevent him from killing her.

Oolra
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
If it weren't for my brother's interference, I would have killed you before you stepped out of this cave the first time.

Kai
You must be Oolra. Your brother told me so much about you.

Oolra
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
My kind aren't here to play your little games.

Oolra tapped Kai's head with the tip of her tentacle to search his memory banks. His whole body involuntarily squirmed like a worm hanging upside down in the air. Kai's skin became clammy and pale as the squirming turned into pulsations. Within seconds, he was dripping beads of sweat. The pulsations turned into violent, convulsive movements. Kai's eyes were moving side to side as his whole body trembled.

Oolra finished extracting information from Kai and dropped him to the ground. Kai quickly glanced at his portal bracelet. Oolra grabbed him by all extremities and pulled them away from the center of his body.

Oolra
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
You slaughtered my brother and large swaths of my people! For that, I am going to enjoy eating you slowly, piece by piece, Kai.

Chapter 9 - Cosmic Crunch

Kai
You knew your brother was the one who would have solidified your evolutionary future with the Jinaan, and you quashed it all because you were never fully satisfied.

Oolra
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
A life partially lived is a life not worth living. The Cosmos encoded this philosophy in our genetics. Not living by it would be to go against our very nature.

Kai
Your brother went against his nature when he asked me to slice his face off. His ability to go against it made him something greater than you.

One of Kai's bracelet portals slowly floated away from his wrist.

Oolra
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
My brother was a fool then. There serves no purpose going against our essence. Even the universe will eat everything in the end, so why should we be any different? With the expanding grid of spacetime, there are plenty of living beings for us to consume and thrive on for eons to come. Your planet is just the start. We have our entire trip planned out after we devour your kind's entire history from this planet.

The transdimensional rift expanded thirty feet behind Kai, facing away from Oolra's visionary field. Ipitoor Xeevnonan emerged with fervor, employing all appendages to execute an acrobatic cartwheel towards the supreme leader, who, overtaken by trepidation, inadvertently discarded her evening meal. Swiftly, Kai crawled away from her side. As Ipitoor lunged toward Oolra, she instinctively ripped open an exit and soared through it, sealing the passage just before Ipitoor could close the distance.

Later that day, Kai resolved it was time to reveal to his family the unfolding events of the world beyond their cosmically secluded existence. Dev continued to harbor resentment toward Kai, so she refrained from joining, preferring the sweet bliss believed to come from ignorance. Kai conjured a portal to the Ganjan command center, through which the others leapt. He skillfully led them to where Albert stood awaiting their arrival. Albert turned to confront Kai and his family.

Albert
Good evening, esteemed guests. Or perhaps it remains daylight? Ah, I seem to have wandered through these rabbit holes for too long to discern the passage of time. Welcome to our center of operation.

Kai turned his gaze to his family, then activated the touch board, summoning a multitude of recordings that chronicled the unfolding events since the arrival of the extraterrestrials. They all faced the screen, looking shocked at the site of the Hagad feasting on the flesh of humans and other animals. Everyone turned away in disgust when they witnessed a human toddler's face torn off by tentacular suctioning, imprinting the final fateful sound deep in their psyche.

Kai

This is what we have been dealing with. I wanted to show you so you don't feel left in the dark.

Eugene

Are you going back out there?

Kai

Unfortunately, yes.

Eugene

Could you get me a six-pack of Miller on your way back?

Kai ignored his biological father.

Eugene

Kai, did you hear me?

Kai continued to disregard him.

Eugene

(Anxiously)

Kai, I haven't had a beer in like forever!

Kai shot a dirty look at Eugene.

Kai

I'll shove your head through another portal and show you forever if you don't stop bugging me to get you your poison.

Eugene

I'll die if I don't have a drink!

Kai

And you'll die if you do have a drink!

Kai turned away. A notification sounded off, gravitating everyone's attention to the viewing screen. James pressed a button on the touchboard, springing up a live video feed showing an army of new-looking flicker creatures slaying Ganjans.

Kai

Holy shit! That's why she brought me to the cave — to extract the information necessary to build an army that could interact with my creatures!

The game had abruptly escalated to the next level. Having journeyed this far, Kai clinched against retreat. His heart raced with a palpable ardor, yet he maintained mastery over his breath. For the ensuing moments, he remained composed and silent, granting himself the luxury of contemplation as his family, including Eugene, afforded him the space to think.

Kai looked back at the screen, watching thousands upon thousands of Ganjans slaughtered in seconds. The Hagad possessed a distinct intellectual superiority over Kai, a fact he had come to recognize from their very first encounter. In light of this realization, he resolved to seek out the enigmatic being he had met that fateful day, the one who had bestowed upon him the extraordinary ability to manipulate the fabric of spacetime. With purpose, Kai stepped forward just moments before Zisser unveiled the approaching cataclysm threatening the very existence of life on his world.

Kai

Zisser, it's me from the future. I need your help. Your sister knows who I am and has countered my one-way interactive transuniversal creatures with her own. In fact, she is probably watching me talk to you right now!

Kai surveyed the dimly illuminated cavern, the faint glow of the moon filtering through the jagged opening above. Shadows loomed among the towering heap of rock debris, remnants of the colossal spaceship that had violently embedded itself into the mountainside, leaving behind a haunting testament to its crash. The air was thick with a sense of suspicion, the stone walls screaming with a quiet warning.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)

You are taking the chance of creating a dangerous paradox, Kai. This moment is vital to who you are now.

Kai
I'll deal with that if the time comes. Until then, I need your help.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
You made an artificial past with dangerous tidal rippling effects on the timelines. The consequences have already occurred and will continue with each passing moment you are here.

Kai
I'll face the consequences if need be. For now, I need your help fixing something else that is important. I am not smart enough to figure out how Oolra encoded her transuniversal creatures. All I know is that she extracted the information from me to build her own.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
I am unable to help you without Oolra here in my presence.

Kai
If I could get her here, would you help me out?

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
You would need to bring her here alive.

A loud, high-pitched sound pierced the cave space before a laser beam burned through Zisser's core upper brain. Kai flickered into static particles, splitting into two copies of himself, a powerless version in front, and the author of realities in the back. As he beheld Oolra materialize from the shadows atop the craggy outcrop, he instinctively tore open a cosmic rift in anticipation of her impending attack. His instincts proved prescient. The breach in the fabric of spacetime shielded him as the laser beam navigated through the portal, piercing the depths

of the Atlantic ocean just moments before the water surged through the confined cosmic aperture, propelling Oolra forcefully against the cave floor.

Kai tried to slice her face off with the edges of existence, but she blocked it with an ethereal exit that she shoved her head through, crawling into another place in time. Kai opened a portal in the cave facing her backside. As he watched Oolra slither in, he opened another gateway inside hers before she closed it.

Kai jumped through the portal and spotted Oolra, her figure a blur against the dunes, as she raced through the undulating waves of sand, a wild spirit amid a timeless landscape. Without hesitation, she opened another universal window, attempting to slip away once more. But Kai, resolute and agile, mirrored her movements with uncanny precision like a shadow, their chase a delicate dance through the fabric of time itself. With each portal Oolra conjured, Kai forged an entrance of his own, creating a labyrinth of shimmering doorways through which they darted.

Oolra, now thoroughly exasperated, summoned yet another passage through which her flickering minions surged towards Kai. In response, he pivoted and conjured a cosmic gateway that led to the rooftop of a towering edifice, approximately five hundred feet tall. He alighted upon the building's summit, fixing his gaze on Oolra below, then decisively closed the portal behind him. Undeterred, Oolra opened another portal to leap through. In a swift, defiant motion, Kai ripped a spacetime rift on the opposite side of hers and plunged through.

Suddenly, they found themselves on a grand theater stage in London, the year 1899. The audience erupted in panic, rising in terror as they scrambled for the exits, their cries of alarm echoing in the opulent hall. Oolra jumped off the stage, biting the heads off of the audience members before slithering off scene. She hacked another cosmic cleavage, gliding through it. Kai quickly slashed another cosmic cavity inside hers a split second before it closed. He saw her dashing through the snow as he charged through his cosmic aperature. He sliced all of her tentacles off with the fourth dimension, causing her to fall helplessly into a pile of glistening snow. Kai stood over her with an expression of disgust, the cold wind blowing through his hair, and a moment of agreed silence.

Kai and Oolra were forged into a parallel timeline when she blasted her brother's face off. Kai's powerless duplicate was proof of that. He looked over at his portal bracelet on his left wrist and right-side hyper-handed. He floated one of the mini gateways attached to his left wrist to the airspace in front of him. He widened it and saw many Ganjans on the other side doing business in the command center rabbit hole angled with his baseverse. Every single one of them stopped what they were doing to look over at Kai and Oolra's tentacle-less head on the other side of the portal.

Kai

Are you guys just gonna stare at me, or are you gonna help me drag her body through the rabbit hole?

A dozen Ganjans slid through the gateway and surrounded Oolra's tentacle-less head. She growled a helpless metallic sound at everyone. Each Ganjan grabbed a section of her head and dragged her into the rabbit hole. They laid Oolra down about ten feet in front of the communications console with the portal about a foot in front of it. Kai shut the transdimensional rift and then opened another under him and Oolra. They both fell through, landing a foot down to the cave ground with a mild thump, moments after Zisser had given Kai his ability to manipulate spacetime.

The growing sound of whirring helicopters rippled throughout the cave as Kai drifted the cosmic entrance upward just enough to walk forward. Some of the Ganjans climbed down through it and lifted Oolra again. They carried her towards her brother Zisser.

Kai

You said if I gave her to you, you could extract the codes needed to combat her creations from the White Space.

Zisser grabbed his sister's tentacle-less head. The Hagad have no torsos and can survive with just their head intact. Zisser stuck the tip of his tentacle on her forehead. She pulsated before becoming fully convulsive. Zisser's head lit up with a variety of colors. He then used another tentacle to grab Kai and touched his forehead with the tip of the tentacle. Kai began to pulsate before dropping to the floor in full convulsions. Zisser paused and disconnected from both of them.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
This is the wrong Oolra, Kai.

Kai anxiously combed his hands through his hair.

Kai
After all that?

As the helicopters drew nearer, a palpable urgency surged within Kai; it was time to depart and seek the correct version of Oolra. With a swift motion, he tore open a gateway to the present iteration of the cave, a sanctuary where shadows whispered of destinies entwined. He intended to thwart her from extracting the codes nestled within him. However, his calculations unveiled perilous paradoxes that threatened to unleash horrors far grander than the Hagad. His most viable course of action was to infiltrate the moment just after she ensnared him for the extraction, but before she vanished from the cave's ominous grasp. Thus, Kai conjured an eye-sized voyeuristic aperture the moments after the code seizure.

He beheld Oolra activate her exit portal, and with precise determination, he created a rupture within it, a calculated intrusion into her escape. He sealed his initial peeping hole, and realigned his gaze to the new spy view, where Oolra glided into her command ship, suspended above the blue sphere of Earth. The airspace through which she crossed morphed into a viscous purple liquid-light barrier, solidifying with unsettling finality.

Kai, driven by an insatiable curiosity, tore open another viewing portal within her private chamber, an intimate and perilous act of surveillance. He watched in muted reverence as she summoned an array of rurnanuros around her head. Their varied pitches intertwined to create the enigmatic cadence of the Hagad tongue, an incomprehensible yet mesmerizing chorus that filled the space with an otherworldly resonance that poured through the portal to drench the minds of her subordinates. While the words eluded his comprehension, Kai remained captivated, enveloped in a haze of darkness, waiting for the moment to unfold.

Then, with a cacophony of harmonized sounds erupting from the myriad of rurnanuros encircling her head, Oolra unleashed a series of shrieks that echoed through the stillness. The final roars emanated from the rurnanuros positioned on the posterier side of her head, a grim symphony that heralded her next move. In an instant, she closed her viewing portal and enveloped herself in a burgeoning, blinding light, her form dissolving into shadow. It was as if time itself held its breath, the world pausing for a mere flicker as she slipped into the mysterious depths of the White Space and back into the unified locality of her private quarter.

Moments later, Oolra established a gateway back to Earth. Kai seized the opportunity, tearing open another peeping portal within her exit and deftly maneuvering the entrance side of it to his left wrist. In an act heralded by the convergence of cosmic forces, he tore through another dimensional fissure, landing amidst the labyrinthine confines of his command center. The peeping portal, now tethered to his wrist, was drawn towards the command console, a silent testament to his audacious journey through shadows and secrets. Kai automated a program for the mini spy-gate to follow Oolra while he coordinated the next steps. Ipitoor Xeevnonan glided gracefully toward Kai.

Ipitoor Xeevnonan
You should listen to Zisser.

Kai
I know. You're right. The only other way would be through a separate timeline. But then I would be causing cross-ripples that could cancel them out, including this one. And even if I didn't cause universes to be wiped out of existence by sheer luck, the ripples could still push them in undesirable directions.

Ipitoor Xeevnonan
You could go back, but you already crunched time twice on this segment of the greaterline. My computations quantify a 98.25 percent chance of a cosmic tidal wave being created the next time you return to that vital moment. It could wipe out the entire bundle.

Kai

So then, my only choices are to mess up other timelines or let my own get destroyed. I need those codes. Without them, we are guaranteed to be defeated and deleted. I have to take the chance and hop over to another universe.

Kai's hands turned into shadow hyper-hands, forming an intensifying white light around his whole body. He disappeared for only a flicker before returning.

Kai

Alright, I found a workable universe. I set a portal in it and attached the entrance to my wrist.

He surveyed the assembly of Ganjans before shifting his gaze to Einstein and James. Both offered him whimsical smiles, which he reciprocated with a playful grin of his own. With a deliberate motion, he maneuvered the portal on the command console, drawing it back toward himself as it expanded. By the time it enveloped him, it had grown sufficiently large to encompass his entire being.

As twilight cloaked the city of Shanghai, China, in a shroud of deepening shadows, Oolra's transuniversal creatures emerged from the cosmic aperture, their forms flickering in still frames in a haunting array. They advanced through the desolate streets, where the dying lights danced over a grim scene of madness. The air was polluted with a metallic tang, as vibrant reds and deep blacks painted a harrowing portrait of carnage, contrasting starkly with the fading tints of dusk. Oolra's flicker creatures inched past abandoned food vending stands and rotted human organic leftovers as they hunted for Ganjans.

Beneath the weight of the dense night, the once-bustling metropolis lay uncannily still, with only the distant echoes of despair reverberating through the alleys, a grim reminder of lives irrevocably altered. As the last rays of the sun surrendered to the encroaching darkness, the city became a grotesque canvas of half-eaten humans attempting to crawl away from gangs of playful Hagad, the entertainment illuminated by flickering flames that cast unsettling watchful shadows behind them, revealing the depth of horror lurking in every corner. A state of boredom plagued the Hagad in response to the abundance of satiation, and craftful ways to ingest their food became a game. The Ganjans, caught in this nightmare, faced the inexorable approach of these otherworldly beings, their fate intertwined with the grotesque and the macabre.

When help was spread thin and resources dwindled, the lucky were forced to play with a new hand. A battered corporate shark sat on a motorcycle, shaded by the darkening night, waiting for the perfect moment to zoom off. He survived this long in solitude in an underground bunker, but madness drove him into the calling depths of the world above. The rugged royal, soiled in his own mess, perspired dirt off his cheeks as he sparked the motorcycle engine on. Breathing heavier with each passing second, he waited for the roaring sound of a Hagad to pass before ripping off through the alley and zipping past incorporated corpses, surplus souls he once manufactured and owned. He curled his head around to process the decomposition of his societal status lying there as a memorial to his kingdom.

Shanghai's prince faced forward before swiveling into an unexpected turn. A Hagad roared at the deluxe meat as the motorcycle spun back around and darted off. The Hagad whipped her tentacle, missing the game by inches. Richie Rich peeped down in the mirror, laughing with relief and a growing confidence feeding on the sores of a loser. But the play was not a checkmate, for the cephalopodic opponent grabbed onto well-stationed metal streetlight poles leveraged to the city ground with two of her twenty-four tentacles wrapped around them. She then ripped open fifteen more portals from places all over the city, wrapping her peripherals around the metal heads of monuments, the cornerstones of skyscrapers, and a dance pole inside a strip club she had visited for lunch earlier that day.

The fourth dimension lacerated behind the rolling regal, and a tentacle reeled out, slingshotting him into the night sky. Calculating the trajectory of her dinner, the hungry Hagad opened a cosmic catcher. One end was suctioned to her feeding cavity, located at the bottom of her head, situated between her core tentacles. The other end, a two-dimensional opening, was positioned in midair, ready for the food to fly in for the score. In his final moments, the former Shanghai predator prayed before becoming the prey.

Kai entered the darkening dimension and found Oolra maniacally laughing as the flicker creatures pummeled their way through her universal rift in still frames, bit by bit. As the Ganjans were tearing Hagad apart, many halves smashed against skyscraper windows, others splashed across the two-dimensional surfaces of the

city streets, the flicker creatures slid through Kai's guys like butter. Earth's transuniversal soldiers attempted to defend themselves from being piled high like a pizza pie, but without Oolra's codes, their gruesome destinies were baked in. As they attacked the Ganjans, Oolra appeared open and distracted, so Kai cut her tentacles off and dropped her through a cosmic passage. She landed right in front of Zisser from the other universe. Kai jumped through the same gateway and landed beside that universe's Kai, who acted surprised. Helicopter sounds blazed in the background.

Kai Prime

Hi Zisser, sorry to bother the two of you, but this is the only way. In my universe, you stated that if I gave you the correct Oolra, you could extract the codes she used to build her transuniversal army, which are damaging my one-way interactive transuniversal creatures. Here she is.

Zisser slid one of his tentacles up Kai Prime's body and tipped it to his forehead, and another tentacle tipped to Oolra's forehead, containing her main brain. Both bodies violently convulsed as military personnel, including Lieutenant Kowalsky, coasted down their chopper ropes. Before they landed, a portal ripped open, and Oolra's creations flickered through. The U.S. soldiers landed on the rocks. Oolra's flicker creatures aimed themselves toward everyone before the soldiers shot bullets that ran through them. The flicker creatures continued toward the fleet of armed men and ripped them apart, starting with Lieutenant Kowalsky. Kai's friend had his guts poured all over the place, with one half of the corpse on the pile of rock debris and the other half on the cave ground.

Zisser could not finish transferring information into Kai Prime because the flicker creatures grabbed Oolra, ripped open an escape, and brought her to the other side. Kai Prime stopped convulsing before he realized she was gone again. He looked at the shredded version of James bleeding out before looking up at the multiple helicopters shining their lights into the cave. Kai Prime peered back down at Kai 2.

Kai Prime

Kai 2, you don't know how badly I just fucked up your story from unfolding the way it was headed. You kind of needed these guys, so it might be a good idea for me to intervene and even shit out here.

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
I do not recommend you do that, Kai.

Kai Prime
I already messed things up this much. What will a little extra modification really do in the grander scheme of things?

Zisser
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
Numerous unforeseen complications could manifest.
Kai Prime
This could be an opportunity to fix things a bit. I can show him the ropes and get him up to par with everything. That way, when his story unfolds, he will have the knowledge of how it would have played out to help guide him on his new storyline that I just messed up. It's sound logic, Zisser. In the end, despite the vast distances, the differences could eventually reach and affect my greaterbaseverse.

Zisser did not respond. Kai Prime stripped open another cosmic window, and both Kai's jumped through it.

Chapter 10 - The Life Of Death

Kai Prime had guided Kai 2 into a new rabbit hole, a sanctuary for them to ponder the unfamiliar reality that loomed before them. A shared understanding was essential in their circumstance. With great care, Kai Prime brought Kai 2 up to speed, imparting the bag of tricks he had acquired along his journey and the relationships he forged that altered the course of his actions.

He revealed the profound bond he had forged with Einstein, as well as the intriguing dynamic he had cultivated with James, a fervent Zionist who had, for the sake of a higher purpose, set aside his convictions to collaborate with Kai Prime. Without James's pivotal support, Kai Prime would not have salvaged as many lives as he had. He earnestly advised Kai 2 to concentrate on the immediate present upon his return, prioritizing the closed doorways to the future, even if their cooperation was not guaranteed. Although Kai 2 may lack the assistance of James's military status and articulate communication to rally a global assembly, he had the remarkable ability to encompass entire countries — should the need arise — into the rabbit holes through the transdimensional portals he had the power to ingeniously craft.

As the Kais grappled with their now separate but still intertwined destinies, Kai 2 unwittingly began to carve out his own identity. Existing in an artificially diverged worldline, he found himself on an unintended path of character growth. Unlike his doppelganger, Kai 2 had not experienced the same familial shifts yet. Hearing about the differences and the chance to encounter his family at a moment when their perceptions of him were beginning to change unexpectedly alleviated a significant burden he was carrying, as if the weight of the world became lighter within a moment.

Both Kais plunged into the rabbit hole of their family, confronting a maelstrom of confusion. Dev's animated hand gestures and widening eyes suggested that her mind was on the brink of explosion. Eugene, however, remained oblivious to the strange spectacle, lost in a state of delirium. It had been quite some time since Kai Prime administered the medication for his biological father's delirium tremens, and now it appeared that Eugene's condition had deteriorated significantly.

Kai Prime

Are you ok, Gene?

Eugene did not respond and continued to shake violently. Kai Prime helped him to one of the many chairs in the rabbit hole. Before he sat Eugene down, he had noticed a large brown spot on the back of his birth father's pants. Kai Prime turned around and looked at everyone.

Sol

He's been doing that for weeks, and it's been getting worse ever since he discovered the liquor section at the grocery store you put here for us to use.

Kai Prime

Why was he asking me for beer the other day if he already had access to it?

Sol

Because they ran out of his favorite kind.

Kai Prime shook his head as he sat his estranged father down. He ripped open a portal to a pharmacy, but before he could jump through, he heard a loud wet explosion come from Eugene. Kai Prime turned around to see fecal fluid pooling around his chair before he slouched over and fell into it, splashing the poop puddle in every direction. Fearing the worst, Kai Prime closed the cosmic orifice and ran to his birth father. He squatted down and put his index and middle fingers over Eugene's left-side carotid artery. After six seconds, Kai pulled his fingers away and closed his own eyes, holding back his tears.

Dev ran over to Eugene and pushed Kai Prime out of the way. She knelt into the expanding sea of liquified shit and shook Eugene as if she could not accept his death. She quickly shot Kai Prime a dirty look.

Dev

You could have done something to prevent this, and instead, you chose to let him die! I will never forgive you for this!

Kai Prime

How could I have done anything more than what I have done, Dev? Just because you want to ignore the reality of what's going on out there, doesn't mean I didn't do my best to help him out. I tried to save him while preventing the permanent deletion of all life from history.

Dev

If you really cared, you'd go back and save him!

Kai Prime

You don't know what I just went through. If I go back and stop the life of death, I will hurt more people than I am helping, and that would make me selfish.

Dev

Then his death is forever on you!

Kai Prime

Nothing I ever do will be enough for you.

Kai Prime breached the barrier of an outlet, leaping through it with Kai 2 into their own singular rabbit hole. With a deliberate motion, Kai Prime sealed the portal, allowing the weight of the situation to overwhelm him as he began to weep.

Kai Prime
We need to bury Eugene before we head back out there.

Kai 2
We don't have time to waste!

Kai Prime
We need to make time.

Kai Prime wiped his runny nose on the frayed cuff of his wrinkled, crimson half-sleeve shirt, the fabric bearing the scars of countless battles and adventures.

Kai 2
That mother fucker said the Mourner's Kaddish for us — multiple times! We have a responsibility that goes beyond our personal lives! I can understand wanting to give him an undeserved burial, but at the cost of more people dying? What has caused you to think differently than me, your identical copy?

Kai Prime
Time.

Kai 2 felt no compulsion to respond to that chord struck; silence enveloped him like a shroud. Once the storm of their emotions had subsided, the two ventured back into the familial rabbit hole.

Kai Prime moved with careful intention toward Dev, who lay curled in the fetal position on one of the beds, her posture suggesting an abandonment of hope. Dark fecal fluid dripped from her dress, cascading to the ground, tainting the sanctuary floor in grim puddles of poop that reflected the vibrant hues of the light coming from the baseworld angled above. As she became aware of his presence, her eyes widened with panic. In a flash, she scrambled to her feet, retreating into the labyrinthine tunnels, leaving behind a wretched path of small,

unceremonious defecated dunes behind her every step, painfully squishing it like a sandwich against the pristine floor.

The clan rabbit hole, once a refuge, now teemed with an air of melancholy. Shadows loomed around the shimmering edeges of the baseworld, as if the very surfaces of the rabbit hole mourned the loss within their embrace. The light that poured in from the boundary crossings seemed to weep, illuminating the scene with a bittersweet glow that deepened the sense of sorrow that clung to the air, heavy and oppressive. Kai Prime trailed after her, yearning to embrace her. However, as he drew near, she rebuffed him and swiftly departed.

Dev

Get away from me, Kai! I don't want anything to do with you!

Defeated, Kai Prime bowed his head in humiliation. At that moment, Talia approached and enveloped him in a comforting hug. Sol soon joined, followed by his Mom and Dad. Ultimately, his biological mother bestowed upon him the final embrace. All the children, along with both of Kai's grandparents, lay asleep as the somber events surrounding Eugene's death and the ensuing interactions unfolded.

In the eerie stillness of the Mount of Olives cemetery, an unsettling beauty enveloped the landscape. The graves, scattered unevenly across the rugged terrain, appeared to whisper beneath a sky alive with shifting hues — vibrant purples, deep blues, and fiery oranges — intertwined within the cosmic rabbit hole. Each color pulsed harmoniously with the energy of the glowing transdimensional openings, as if the light from the baseworld illuminated the graves, merging the earthly with the divine. This luminescence infused the air, creating an atmosphere that felt both sacred and ethereal, like the very heavens had woven themselves into a living tapestry above, echoing the vibrant energies of the land below.

Kai Prime, Kai 2, and Sol labored under the oppressive weight of grief, their hands caked with dirt as they created a final resting place for their father. An unmarked stone lay beneath their fingertips, soon to be splattered with hastily applied spray paint pilfered from a dollar store in 2024. Their father, Eugene Itzkowitz, would be memorialized here, yet the irony of their surroundings

gnawed at them. They stood in the heart of this decaying paradise, where lost souls roamed aimlessly, alive but disoriented, prisoners of a disjointed existence that felt suspended between realms. The shadows of the tombstones loomed large, casting distorted shapes that seemed to whisper forgotten secrets and unfulfilled dreams.

The air was heavy with a vivid scent of acrid smoke drifting over from the tumultuous city. In the distance, Jerusalem was a battlefield of chaos. The crackling sounds of fire echoed in the air, lit by blazes that veiled the horizon, enveloping buildings in a fiery shroud. The flames danced wildly, devouring everything in their path — police cars smoldered like molten metal, their charred heaps melting into the asphalt, while the glow of the fires flickered off the faces of those who had lost their way completely.

A desperate throng surged through the streets, animalistic in their fervor, pushed forward by a primal instinct that drove them toward destruction. Police forces, encased in transparent shields, formed a barricade, their tense bodies reflecting the flickering light. They stood resolute against the tide, however one could see the cracks in their resolve; the weight of their duty sagging upon them as emergency flares sliced through the suffocating darkness.

Back in the cemetery, the atmosphere felt thick with despair. The people meandering amidst the graves were not truly present in their surroundings. They ambled like phantoms trapped in an endless scripted loop, fingers tracing the edges of crumbling tombstones, eyes unseeing but alight with an unfocused yearning, a longing for connection in a world rendered unfamiliar. This eerie tableau was a reminder of the fragility of existence, their purpose dissolved into the ether, forgotten as they wandered through a place that had once been sacred.

As both Kais and Sol stood over their father’s makeshift grave, the sinister symphony of life and destruction ebbed and flowed around them. Anxiety pushed Kai Prime away from the dead source of his trauma, finding comfort under an olive tree. He witnessed Dev gravitating toward the new plot, a site that represented both a final resting place and an uncharted territory of grief, as both Kai 2 and Sol were drawn away to dampen their pain as well. Talia approached Kai Prime, who seemed weathered and drawn, his spirit as charred as the distant

infernos. The cacophony of the riots, the hollow cries of a city in turmoil, served only to deepen the chasm of loss that lay between them, an indelible mark left by heartache in a world teetering on the brink.

Talia

You did everything you could. Dev is just too broken to see that. Don't start doubting yourself now, not after all of this.

Kai Prime

What if she's right? What if I could have done more, and I was just using the world as an excuse?

Talia

After all this, I now realize that isn't true. You cared about him. He hurt you, yes. However, you still chose to save him when you could have just left him to die in his apartment in Jerusalem from either alcohol poisoning, lack of alcohol, or a bunch of aliens eating him. Don't let her get to you. She may never come around, but that isn't your fault. It never was.

Kai Prime gazed up at her, tears welling in his eyes. Talia wrapped her arms around him, holding him close as they swayed together for several moments. From nearby, Sol overheard Talia console his older brother. He couldn't shake the feeling of responsibility for everything that had happened to Kai Prime since October 7th, 2023. The last few weeks had reshaped his perception and feelings towards his abandoned sibling. After witnessing the sacrifice his brother made to save a world that had cast him out to die, Sol could no longer hide from the truth.

Sol knew their biological mother had a history of mixing up facts. He knew he could have just asked his older brother or verified through the timestamped records, but he chose to spread the lie about his brother's words to his entire family. It dawned on Sol at that very moment when he saw the true image of Kai breaking down that he needed him to be the bad guy. Sol needed someone to blame for his life's problems and failures. So when Kai reacted to his family disowning him, Sol fed on it like a leech.

He further exploited Kai's emotional response to the fallout by spreading the lie to their ungrounded father, who then wished death on Kai more times than Kai was aware of. Sol had flashbacks of taking screenshots of his conversation with his

father and sending them to Kai to get him jealous. He remembered sending Kai screenshots of text messages from their father revealing Sol was always the favorite son and that everyone blamed Kai for tearing apart the family.

When Kai became a fugitive, Sol knew he had brought Kai down to where he wanted him. And while it filled up some emptiness briefly, it never replaced the hollow shell that imprisoned his existence. After still feeling incomplete, even with Kai out of the picture, Sol decided to unofficially change his last name back to Itzkowitz. That seemed to help mask his traumatic pain for a while, but inevitably, he knew getting rid of Kai and pretending things could return to how they were if he did not exist would not make him feel whole again. It took Kai's selfless act of saving a brother who would never do the same for him to realize what he had done.

Seeing Kai in so much pain because he had been rejected by his family and the world his entire life made Sol feel something he had suppressed for so long — empathy. Sol had felt rejected all his life and took it out on his older brother due to jealousy and a lack of emotional intelligence. Now that he had become self-aware enough to see past his programming, Sol knew what to do.

He walked over to Dev, who was crying over her father's grave. She was the only one of her siblings never to get adopted, so Euegene's death hit her the hardest. She had the closest relationship with him since they lived only forty-five minutes from each other in Israel. Dev's angst against Kai goes much deeper than Sol's, but Sol had the deepest connection to Dev out of all her siblings. It is why he eventually followed her to Israel. If anyone could open her up to reprogram her mind's image of Kai, it was Sol.

Sol

Now he has an excuse not to remember our birthdays.

Dev fakedly chuckled.

Sol

I know you aren't going to want to hear this, but Kai really needs you now more than ever.

Dev

Don't mention his name, Sol. When this is all over, I am not going to forget all the horrible things he has done to me.

Sol

I hear you. I really do. And if it weren't for Kai saving me when he could have just let my stupid ass get pounced on by a couple of Nazis, I would be saying the same thing as you. But I now realize that instead of facing my problems, I found it easier to just blame it all on him.

Dev

You know all the horrible things he has said to me! Why are you taking his side?

Sol

Because I realize that all I saw of him was what I wanted to be true about him. And when he reacted to us painting him as the villain, we used that as confirmation that we were right. But he's human. We expected his reaction to our treatment of him to be better, and when it wasn't what we expected, we threw him in the garbage like trash.

Sol began to sob a little before holding it back.

Sol

We treated him like he killed a cop. And when he actually did kill one, we pretended we had no part in creating the situation that led up to that. I can only imagine how alone he must have felt. I did that to him! We did that to him!

Dev

Don't go and use us as the excuse for why he killed a cop, Sol!

Sol

I'm not. What I'm saying is that he did what he thought was right, and he would have never had to make that choice if we had just tried to understand where he was coming from rather than label him a terrorist. It's because we needed him to be the villain that led him to be sealed as a villain when, in reality, he was the only one out of all of us to do the right thing.

Dev

Calling me a cunt was the right thing?!?

Sol

I have a pretty shitty memory since I'm an alcoholic like our father was, but I seem to remember you calling him a liar for saying that our mother gave him two black and blue eyes.

Dev

She only gave him one black and blue eye, Sol!

Sol

Do you think it's possible you remember it wrong? I mean, he did have to look in the mirror for six months.

Dev

He's a liar, Sol! You know this just as much as I do!

Sol

What reason would he have to lie about that?

Dev

For attention! He does not care about anyone other than himself! He thinks the world revolves around him, and when he does not get what he wants, he makes shit up! You know this!

Sol

I thought I knew this until I realized I saw and heard things not because they were said or done but because I wanted them to be true. These last few weeks have got me thinking that maybe we blinded ourselves with a false narrative and only saw what we wanted to see. Do you think it's possible that maybe we were wrong all along?

Dev

I have tried to amend our relationship in the past, Sol, and every time he finds a way to hurt me and fuck it all up!

Kai Prime had overheard the bulk of Dev and Sol's conversation. He got up and strode over to them. Kai 2 kept his distance.

Kai Prime

The last time you spoke with me, Dev, was three years ago on my birthday.

Dev

I don't want to talk to you, Kai!

Kai Prime

Sol, Talia — do you guys remember when Dev thought we had forgotten her birthday, but it turned out that she didn't correctly look for our birthday wishes? Do you remember how she told the whole world how horrible her entire family was? She wrote an entire paragraph with specifically false and hurtful insults. Did she ever apologize when she was proven to have smeared her family for no reason?

Dev

That's not true! I apologized!

Talia

I don't remember you saying sorry, either.

Kai Prime

Let's compare it to the reason why you were the first to disown me, and on my own birthday of all days, Dev! Five months before that birthday, when I was moving back to New York from Colorado, I reached out to you on the one number you did not block me on yet. You decided to give our relationship another try. For almost five months straight, we communicated through that phone and that phone alone. I no longer had WhatsApp on the other phone you blocked me on. When it turned eleven p.m. in your timezone on my birthday, and I had not seen any messages from you, I was hurt. Not angry. Hurt.

Kai 2 nodded his head in agreement.

Kai Prime

When I told you I was hurt that I had not heard from you on my birthday, you scolded me and called me a liar. I remember still not being angry and calmly taking a screenshot to show you my end. That is when you said you wished me a happy birthday on my other Whatsapp phone number.

Dev

I did wish you a happy birthday!

Kai Prime

That isn't the point, Dev. The point is that I did not yell at you, curse at you, or attack your character. So once you said you sent me a birthday wish on WhatsApp on my other phone that you blocked, I immediately believed you and was prepared to forget about it.

Dev

So why didn't you?

Kai Prime

I was about to, but then you continued to attack me and said that I always start things. I responded, "I love you. It does not matter who started it. You believe I started it, and I believe you started it. Does it really matter?" And you responded hysterically by calling me a liar and saying I started it. My following twelve responses were word for word the same: "I love you, Dev, let's not blame each other."

Sol and Talia shot each other an expression of clarity, as if a key had unlocked a long-hidden treasure of truth.

Kai Prime

So I was perplexed when, instead of replying to those words, you kept attacking me with blame before blocking me out of your life for good — like I killed a cop or

something. Why was it ok for us to keep a relationship with you after you used the world to attack us on the false premise that we forgot your birthday, but not ok for you to keep a relationship with me after being kind and understanding to the fact that you wished me a happy birthday on the wrong phone number, a line in which you willfully blocked?

Dev

Fuck you! You're twisting the facts, Kai!

Dev got off her knees and started to walk away.

Sol

He's right, Dev. Why should we not apply the same standard to him that we have always applied to each other?

Dev stopped walking and turned around to face her siblings.

Dev

He's not right! He's delusional! He's making it all up!

Sol

And what if he is? What do you think he's gonna do once you cave in and pretend he's right? Now that I think about it, he has done that for us all our lives until we decided to disown him from the family. He was just acting like us. Why not for once act like him?

Dev begrudgingly stomped her way over to Kai Prime, hugged him quickly, shooting Sol a heavy stare.

Dev

Happy?

Sol

Give him another one, and this time, mean it.

Dev wrapped her arms around Kai Prime and held him for about five seconds before attempting to let go. Sol reinforced Dev's hug, wrapping his arms around both of them.

Dev
Let me go, Sol.

Dev struggled to release herself from Sol's bear hug when Talia joined in.

Dev
Let me go!

Sol and Talia tightened their hug and didn't let go until Dev started crying. She held onto Kai Prime as her other siblings backed off.

Dev
I'm so sorry, Kai!

Dev's sobbing intensified as her snot dripped down Kai Prime's back. He pretended not to notice, letting his sister continue to hug him.

Dev
Kai, I'm so sorry, I'm soooo sorry!

Dev repeated her apology as if it were a mantra.

Dev
Oh, God, forgive me!

After the funeral, Kai Prime brought everyone back to the rabbit hole before him, and Kai 2 jumped off to capture Oolra Prime. They landed in her private quarters, where she was resting with a new set of mecha-tentacles. They were different from the ones before that were a hybrid of machine and organism. Kai Prime was about to rip them off when all of Oolra's eyes opened. She tore a portal under herself, falling through it and landing on the grounds of the luscious Amazon

forest. Kai Prime opened a portal inside hers before she closed it. Both Kais jumped through and landed several meters from her.

Kai 2 immediately filled the place with hundreds of portals to distract Oolra while Kai Prime attempted to slice her mecha-tentacles off. Finally, Kai 2 had an opportunity to place a portal under Oolra. She fell through and into an empty prison cell off the coast of Cuba. Before both Kai's could enter the prison, Oolra ripped the cell bars apart with her tentacles. Both Kais landed in the prison hallway and noticed Oolra busted out.

Kai Prime chopped off one of her tentacles as she was fleeing away from them. She kept on pushing despite having one less extremity. Kai 2 chopped off four more tentacles, forcing Oolra to levitate away with the ones left. She turned a corner before tearing the threads of the fourth dimension open. Kai Prime unlocked a gateway around the corner before she ran through the tear so he could be there to place another portal in hers.

Once Kai Prime jumped into the next scene, he severed an entrance for Kai 2 to hop through. That's when Oolra sliced Kai 2's torso in half with an excision through the two-dimensional vertex of reality. The top half of his body fell through it like that Nazi did after he and his buddy dragged Sol out of the 1933 German bar. The other half of his body dropped just as quickly as his top half did. Kai Prime didn't hesitate to slice off Oolra's other tentacles, his initial goal now layered with a vengeance.

Oolra
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
You think you won, but all you did was wake up something far more destructive than us.

Kai Prime
I'm smart enough to know when I'm being manipulated.

Oolra
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
If you kill me, there will be no going back from what happens next. They are paying attention to you, Kai!

Kai Prime
Who is paying attention to me?

Oolra
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
At this point, who's not paying attention? You opened a wider window than you know. At least with me, you would have a quick death. Can't say the same for others.

Kai Prime
What others?

Oolra
(Mind-to-mind transmission)
Kill me, and find out. Either way, you lose.

Kai Prime
No. I need to extract the codes from you.

Kai Prime emerged through a portal with Oolra next to him, landing back in the cave feet away from Zisser just moments after Kai 2 received his powers. The helicopters were approaching. It was in the back of Kai Prime's head that this version of him died in the future, but he now knew not to say anything and to focus on the task at hand.

It was incredibly difficult for him because he had just witnessed the death of his doppelganger, with whom he had formed a bond. To see another version of his copy immediately after that, and right after his biological father had also died, was an agonizing experience for him. The worst part for Kai Prime was knowing that this past duplicate of Kai 2 now only exists because Kai Prime looped Kai 2's dead future self to his past self by coming back to the point in time where he initially extracted him from. While the past version of Kai 2 runs forward, Kai 2 from the future gets to die infinity times to power the splitline universe.

Kai Prime

Kai, I don't have time to explain. Zisser, you said that if I brought her here, you could help me access the codes she used to create her transuniversal soldiers, which can interact with my transuniversal army made in the White Space.

Zisser grabbed Oolra's tentacle-less head. He stuck the tip of one of his appendages on it. She pulsated before becoming fully convulsive. Zisser's head lit up with a variety of colors. He then used another tentacle to touch Kai Prime's forehead. Kai Prime began to pulsate before going into full convulsive mode. Zisser's tentacle tips turned white upon completing the information transfer. He let go of both Oolra and Kai Prime before he severed his sister-wife's face off, exposing the midsection of her main brain. Oolra's visage drooped through the other side of the rims of the fourth dimension and splattered on hardened bear waste a mile down the path both Kai's had initially hiked up. The amplified scent, still lingering at the bottom of both their shoes, acted as markers of Zisser's path to redemption from a not-too-distant past, now wrapped into an infinite point through Kai Prime. Zisser and Kai Prime stared at each other for a long moment as the sound of choppers hovered above the scene with the military officials sliding down the ropes.

Kai Prime
Goodbye, my friend.

The past version of Kai 2 sliced Zisser's face off before Kai Prime left this past version of his doppelganger behind. Prior to entering his baseverse, Kai Prime returned to the White Space to create counter-transuniversal beings with Oolra's codes. He destroyed her entire flicker army before rejoining the Ganjans to finish off the last of the Hagad.

A few weeks passed when Kai and the Ganjans defeated the entire cephalopodic interdimensional force. The payment for it was that now there were no Hagad in this reality to interfere with the Hagad from other universes entering and eating. They would not have to compete with their doppelgangers or face destructive cosmic crunches. The day may come when the Hagad from another universe stumbles across this fact, and Kai will have to go into warrior mode and kaleidoscope reality again. Until then, Kai wanted to live his life.

He stood at the entrance to his quirky comrades' cosmic chamber, a pulsating gateway that shimmered with a sparkling display of curling colors. The air crackled with energy, and he could feel the weight of the Universe pressing against him as he prepared to unleash his friends from the confines of their rabbit hole. Vivid colors swirled around him, casting playful shadows on his face. Each second felt like an eternity, filled with anticipation.

As the portal cracked open, a cacophony of cheers erupted in front of him. His friends, a motley crew of anti-Zionist activists, emerged one by one, stepping out into the battered world that awaited them, a place where decay and hope intertwined. Their faces glowed with exhilaration, their laughter mixing with the fresh air. They clapped him on the back, a chorus of gratitude washing over him, but his gaze remained fixed ahead, heart pounding in expectation.

And then, from the shadows of the rabbit hole, she appeared. Sahab stepped into the light like a beacon, her presence illuminating the darkened corners of his heart. Her hair fluttered in an invisible breeze, and her eyes glittered with a fierce determination that made the world around them fade away. Kai felt an irresistible pull, his breath catching in his throat.

Without thinking, he dashed toward her, heart racing, and scooped her up in his arms, spinning her around as he kissed her deeply. The world ceased to exist in that moment, just the two of them, exploring an endless universe of affection. Sahab laughed a beautiful sound that filled the chaotic space with warmth, her voice blending with relief and joy.

Sahab

I knew you would come back!

As he set her down, their fingers intertwined, and they shared an electric spark that seemed to bridge the chaos and draw them closer together. Sahab squeezed his hand, and they stepped out together, their eyes locked in a silent conversation, filled with promises, hopes, and the thrilling unknown that lay ahead. The landscape around them trembled with potential, waiting for their next adventure.

Sahab joined Kai and his siblings on their next jump through space and time. After a long journey, Kai finally set Einstein down at his home, a place adorned with the warm, colorful glow of familiar fireworks—just in time to celebrate the Fourth of July, albeit under a different light. Before Kai closed the portal, Einstein turned around.

Albert

I find myself compelled to write to Niels Bohr—to tell him the debate is far from over. I now see that the universe is determined, though not in the way I once believed. Yet, I know that unless I could see as you do—across the unfolding itself—it would be unwise to share this with anyone but myself.

Kai

At least for now.

Albert

To what are you implying?

Kai

When you finish *God's Manifesto*, leave it in your bank's depository for me to retrieve and share. Niels may never read it, but his students and theirs will. That way, he'll know too—because he's encoded in his work, just as you will be in yours. It'll only take a few decades for the field to remember.

Albert

Then perhaps I can die knowing there truly is harmony—a hidden order that one day everyone will see.

Kai and Einstein shared a final smile. With a bittersweet farewell, Kai opened the myriad rabbit holes he had woven—each one shimmering like a doorway to another world. As the portals rippled with light, his heart swelled with both hope and the quiet ache of parting.

Kai, his siblings, and Sahab sprang into action, hopping through vibrant interdimensional landscapes that glowed with a spectrum of colors and life. They moved swiftly, almost like an autumn breeze, weaving through scenes of nature and civilization, their spirits high as they sought to aid the weary and oppressed.

As the gaping cosmic holes unfurled, a rush of people surged forth, their faces painted with an initial look of wonder. However, the beauty around them quickly dimmed as they emerged into the stark reality waiting on the other side. The town of Fall River, once a charming slice of Americana, lay in tatters, crumbling buildings and broken signs marked the remnants of what had been.

The air was thick with a heavy silence, broken only by the distant sound of scattered debris. Kai and his siblings helped guide the bewildered crowd, but the joy they had felt turned to concern as the distress among the newly arrived grew palpable. Hopeful smiles melted into expressions of confusion and fear, eyes darting around the bleak surroundings as they took in the desolation.

Kai's heart sank as he watched the transition; he could feel the weight of their despair. He glanced at his family, their faces mirroring his worry. Together, they steered the masses, delicate yet determined, towards a place they could regroup and find solace amidst the chaos of the new hellscape that had consumed their former lives.

People noticed all the dead cephalopodic and flicker creatures cooking in the intensely bright sun. Without a cloud in the sky to block the radiant power, the rotting stench of the Hagad bodies that lay waste watered the crowd's eyes and deeply soaked into their clothing. Scraps of humans and other Earth animals were scattered far and wide, with blood pooling everywhere on the ground.

The Hagad demolished many homes, tore apart buildings like toothpicks, and ravaged the streets to rubble. The rivers of blood, guts, and other particulates flowing downhill on Presidents Avenue's rocky road and the parallel high school grassy park slope hypnotized everyone. As reality began to collectively set in, many recognized Kai's face.

Man 1

Hey, aren’t you that time ripper guy?

Many more people took notice.

Dev

He is “that time ripper guy”!

The crowd began to reenergize, hoping that his presence among them meant they were safe again.

Woman 1

Are those creatures gone? We saw you fight them on the TVs in the rabbit hole.

Kai nodded.

Kai

Yes. Definitely.

The crowd cheered as Dev smiled at Kai, reciprocating her positive energy. Sol placed a hand on Kai's back in support.

Woman 2

They destroyed everything. What do we do now?

Kai

We rebuild.

Kai, his siblings, and Sahab, spent the next few weeks helping people find shelter, food, and lost family members. Kai influenced many big businesses to help out, too. Some were even kind enough to offer still-standing offices to people needing shelter. Kai was surprised at the level of cooperation and kindness from many prominent people. Being in the same existential boat as everyone else had made many of them more empathetic to others they usually would not be compassionate to. Many had donated much of their money to help rebuild the homes of people they never met, and others started free food programs.

When things were up and running again, the world called on The Time Ripper to assure them that there were no more Hagad left to delete life on Earth from history. Kai set up a live conference between him and many media outlets worldwide to meet at the U.N. The world waited in anticipation to hear what Kai had to say.

Kai

I know that despite exiting the rabbit holes, many of you are still worried that there is a threat. And to those who fear this, I will not lie to you. It is a possibility. If the same aliens from another universe discovered that this universe is free of their doppelgangers, they may be enticed to come here and feast on us.

Kai analyzed the apprehensive audience with an air of unwavering confidence.

Kai

However, we have won the war. We should celebrate that rather than return to our old scripted habits of allowing fear to lead us, which has caused all our other problems in the first place. In fact, I want to ensure that Earth has a vibrant future. In the coming months, I will personally dismantle the U.S. global hegemony and restart the world under a real democracy advanced with artificial intelligence. There will be no more corporate dictatorships ruling the global economy.

He halted, taking a moment to reassess the shifting feelings that were gathering in the atmosphere around him.

Kai

After this is accomplished, I will enforce public ownership of all goods and services. The many will now benefit, not just the few. In this new world, all individual freedoms will be recognized and honored as long as they do not infringe on the safety and happiness of others. I beg for us to do better than our current master-slave system — the system that allows the ruling class to exploit the working class at any expense and to replace it with a cooperative system that caters not to the few, but to all. I yearn for a day when we prioritize life over inanimate objects and work together to become something greater.

Kai paused with a heavy sigh.

Kai

After everything we just went through, for God's sake, put down your weapons. Shut down your greedy systems. Forget about nation-building. Bring down your borders. Learn to love everyone you encounter. And to those incapable of love,

don't worry. We will have enough love surplus to give to you, too. Today should not be a day to relive our worst fears. Today is a day to celebrate life. Tomorrow, we begin building a new and better world, and I will be there to continue to guide it through to the other side of the tunnel.

He slanted himself toward the podium, his gaze intensely fixated on a single camera before him, as though he were deliberately shutting out the remainder of the world from his perception.

Kai

And, as for Israel, *I'm keeping the spacetime protective domes over both the Palestinian concentration camps until further notice. That should act as some sort of deterrence from your genocide while we figure out how to solve your multigenerational mass-level trauma. While we do that, I will personally see to it that all officials who were involved in the information coverup, the complete dismantlement of democracy, and crimes against humanity are collected and put on trial at the Hague so we can determine the best form of rehabilitation for them.*

Kai paused, slowly breathed in, exhaling even slower.

Kai

Never again means never again for anyone. Let today be the day we agree to teach our children compassion and understanding. Let empathy be our guide to a better tomorrow.

The room remained silent for a long moment before clapping in unison. Kai shared a wide smile that the whole world could see, and in that moment, the world smiled back. Kai waved his hand before ripping open a portal to his grandmother's house in Long Island, New York, where his whole family gathered for the day. He walked into the kitchen to see everyone there with broad smiles. They were all watching Kai's speech on the TV before looking up at him excitedly. Sol walked up to Kai and hugged him.

Sol

Thank you for never giving up on us, even when we gave up on you.

Kai

It all needed to play out this way.

Sol backed up a bit, still holding Kai's shoulders.

Sol

What do you mean?

Kai

I would have never become The Time Ripper if the set of events never unfolded. You made me who I am, and for that, I'm thankful.

Sol hugged Kai again before allowing everyone else to hug him. Kai didn't feel so alone for the first time in a long time. He knew challenges were brewing, but that did not matter for now. Building a better reality was more of a priority for him. He got the second chance he had always been looking for.

Later that night, James invited Kai to celebrate Earth's victory with him at Roosevelt's Tavern in Ouray, Colorado. When Kai arrived, he saw James drinking a beer at a table near a window inside the restaurant. Heavy snow continued to fall, piling up in the mountainous scenery that pocketed the ravaged little ghost town. Before walking inside, Kai noticed all the homes and businesses left in ruins. Ouray Main Street Inn and Roosevelt's Tavern were the only two places standing.

Kai found James sitting in the dark tavern with only the moon's illumination exposing him. The establishment appeared frozen in time. Rotting meals sat on the tabled plates patrons had abandoned, and flies capitalized on the human's demise by making the place their utopia. Kai strode past the lifeless bar and sat down across from James.

James

I figured we should celebrate our victory where it all started.

Kai

Kind of a gloomy way to party, wouldn't you say?

James

Look what's left around you. How else do we rejoice?

Kai

We will rebuild, James.

Silence governed the moment. James shot a look at the bar before jumping up.

James

Here, let me get you a beer.

Kai

No, that's ok. I don't drink.

James paused his jog to the bar and faced Kai ripping open a portal to an abandoned dispensary in the neighboring town of Ridgeway. Kai grabbed a prerolled joint and a lighter before sealing the seams of the fourth dimension. He fired up the Sinsemilla and blew smoke out his nostrils like a dragon. Both sat down as the flower aroma filled the indoor atmosphere. James veered his attention out the window and sipped his beer as Kai's smoke surrounded his face.

James

You know, it wasn't that long ago when I was chasing you.

Kai

Now look at us, two amigos sharing a victory together.

James chuckled, followed by Kai. James took another sip of his beer.

James

Let me ask you something, Kai.

Kai

Shoot.

James

From what I gather, you come from a religious background.

Kai

My biological parents were influenced in college to “return to the path” by a bunch of Rabbis. I found my way out of it in my earlier years — but yes, once upon a time, I was religious.

James

What made you go against your own people?

Kai uncomfortably chuckled.

Kai

Do you really want to open up Pandora's box here?

James

I’m just curious. I grew up in a conservative Jewish home. Over the years, I became more religious.

Kai

Like keeping Shabbos and shit?

James

For the most part. I consider myself a traditionalist.

Kai took a big hit of his joint and blew the smoke out of the side of his mouth as James sipped his beer.

James

But you grew up Orthodox. How did you go from a devout practitioner to a traitor?

Kai’s cheeks blushed as he smiled, blowing smoke out.

Kai

That’s a strong word to use.

James

Well, what else would you call it when you side with the enemy?

Kai

James, we just went through hell and back! We lost countless amounts of life on this planet. Can we try and move past our differences? We defeated the real enemy. We saved a buttload of people, and we changed the world for the better. How about we focus on that?

James

And forget about everything our people built and fought for?

Kai

That was the old world, James. That's gone now. This war gave us a chance to reset our course and do better.

James

At the expense of our people, Kai. We paid for your new world at the cost of losing our soul.

Kai

We never lost our soul. It evolved. That's what happens when you allow time to unfold.

Kai took one last puff before tearing open the cosmic fabric and standing up. He kept his eyes on James as he breathed the smoke out.

Kai

I'll see you around, James.

James nodded before veering his attention out the window. He sipped his beer, gazing up at the moon. Kai stared at James for another short moment before jumping through to the other side of the universal exit.

Chapter 11 - The Messiah of the Underworld

The cosmic war against the interdimensional predators had set Earth on a transformative path, scattering shards of old order like fractured glass. In the midst of chaos and confusion, Kai emerged as a beacon of hope, an unconventional hero determined to lead humanity into a new dawn. With a firm resolve, he took out the trash, but this was no ordinary cleanup. Kai constructed a rabbit hole, a wondrous, light-spiraling gateway that could conceal those who had exploited power for far too long.

Inside this labyrinth of light and shadow, hundreds of thousands of government officials found themselves in a temporary stasis: the President of the United States, his entire cabinet, and the majority of Congress, all enveloped in an ethereal embrace. It was not merely an act of vengeance but a necessary evolution. Among those imprisoned were judges from the highest court, leaders from distant lands, military figures who once wielded authority with impunity, and

corporate overlords that fed on the blood of the innocent. Kai's aim was not retribution; instead, he sought to streamline a judicial process long overdue for transformation.

As the old systems crumbled, a mosaic of communities emerged from the rubble. Kai offered each group access to spacetime portals, shimmering pathways that bridged distances and fostered collaboration, a beautiful tapestry of unity woven from diversity. With market shareholders and tyrannical management frightened off, the workers seized control of their destinies, breathing new life into burned-out corporations. Dictatorships disguised in freedom, like the United States, were replaced by vibrant real democracies, and every individual claimed ownership of their shared future.

Kai catalyzed a seismic shift from the bondage of debt-laden currency to a radiant, decentralized form of exchange born from love itself. It was a simple but profound concept: perform acts of kindness, and that altruism would translate into value. With support from this new currency, everyone would receive a basic monthly income, nurturing an environment where generosity flourished. The potential for inflation vanished under the weight of abundance; real estate flowed boundlessly through Kai’s rabbit holes, genetically modified food thrived, and lab-grown meat infused every table with sustenance.

The healthcare landscape blossomed into a realm of compassion, free from the shackles of greed. Doctors began to heal without hesitation, rewarded for the joy of seeing their patients thrive. For example, if a physician successfully helped a patient quit smoking tobacco, the outcome reaped rewards beyond measure. They were compensated not just with more money on top of their work salaries and universal basic income but with the satisfaction of lives transformed. The system that once prioritized profit was replaced with one that cherished humanity.

As the world rapidly advanced, a sense of hope surged through the collective consciousness. The remnants of greed were dismantled, leaving room for innovation and empathy to flourish. With the aid of artificial intelligence, Kai integrated democratic processes, ensuring that every voice was heard. Automated machine networks became the stewards of fair governance, analyzing needs and facilitating town hall meetings where communities engaged

in vibrant discussions. A beautiful cycle of feedback and evolution took shape, nurturing a fair and just society.

Yet amid the optimism, some souls clung persistently to the shadows of the past. James, once a close ally of Kai, had stepped back, grappling with the swirling uncertainties of a reinvented world. In the wake of the military's dissolution, he'd carved out a new life with friends who shared a nostalgic longing for what was lost. Resentment brewed within him, an emotion that gnawed at his spirit even as the world around him bloomed.

One fateful day, Kai reached out, extending an invitation to dinner, a friendly gesture laden with unspoken tension. James felt the pull between respect for his old friend and the haunting echoes of everything he opposed. Each tick of the clock deepened his existential cocoon, exposing him to an internal tempest. After much deliberation, he accepted Kai's invitation, a decision that stirred something dormant within him.

Years had passed since humanity had pressed the reset button. The air was electric with change, the landscape transformed into a canvas of vibrant possibility. Machines, once designed for death and destruction, now cultivated life, erecting homes more swiftly than ever, planting forests that danced under the sun, and hunting down those who had waged war on innocence. When Kai led the charge against Israel's former leaders — Itamar Ben-Gvir, Yoav Gallant, and Benjamin Netanyahu, the world erupted in joy. Humanity Day was born from their arrests, a celebration of justice that painted the sky with hope and reawakened James from his existential slumber.

In the Hague, under the solemn gaze of history, Kai prepared to testify against Israel's former Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. He had meticulously crafted a video portfolio, a haunting but necessary chronicle of past atrocities, time ripped from the fabric of reality, woven into evidence for the world to see. As he embarked on this crucial mission, a flicker of hope ignited in his heart, illuminating the path ahead as he sought to usher in a new era of accountability, healing, and unity for all humankind.

As Kai finished his testimony, his words hung in the air like a thick fog when suddenly, a swirling cosmic rift erupted beneath him. It tore through reality with a

blinding flash, swallowing him whole before he could comprehend what was happening. He tumbled through a kaleidoscope of colors and shimmering lights, his heart racing, and landed with a soft jarring thud in a tubular cell that seemed to stretch infinitely in all directions.

The walls were made of a glass-like substance, rippling with iridescent hues that shifted with every movement. Kai felt a wave of panic wash over him as he surveyed his surroundings. The air was heavy, charged with a strange energy that felt both oppressive and alive. Determined to escape, he concentrated on slicing through the shimmering barrier, channeling every ounce of his strength into his attempts. But each strike met with futile resistance, as if the cosmos itself conspired against him.

Frustration boiling over, Kai began to pound on the thick, alien walls of his prison, the sound echoing like a dull drumbeat in the vast emptiness. Each bang reverberated through the chamber, a desperate plea for freedom that seemed swallowed by the silence of the void beyond. The still sound animated into a familiar voice.

Familiar male voice

You're not getting out of here. We can thank the Hagad technology for that.

Before Kai loomed an unsettling visage, shrouded in shadows and flickering lights, peering through the cosmic barrier that undulated with an unsettling vibrancy, as if alive with a malevolent intent. The swirling colors — deep purples mixed with sickly greens, reflected the turmoil within him, tainting the air with an acrid scent of despair.

There, on the other side, emerged the figure of James Kowalsky, his presence distorted by the barrier's tremors, yet unmistakably sinister. His lips curled into a grin reminiscent of the Cheshire cat, stretching unnaturally across his face, an eerie smile that spoke of secrets dark and twisted. It was a smile that gleamed with unsettling glee, betraying more dread than delight, and in that moment, it felt as if the very ground beneath Kai was crumbling into an abyss.

Kai was rooted in place, paralyzed not just by fear but by the weight of betrayal clinging to the air, like an overused aerosol. The world around him grew dim, as

though the encroaching darkness were siphoning light itself. Every heartbeat echoed painfully in his chest, reverberating his horror at the unfathomable creature that once was his friend, now transformed into something grotesque and menacing.

The backdrop pulsed with a disorienting rhythm, a landscape of chaos and shadows. Wailing winds howled through the space, carrying whispers of doom that toyed with Kai's sanity, drowning him in terror. Every chaotic swirl of color seemed to breathe malevolence, ensnaring Kai in a web of despair as he sought to comprehend the twisted expression on James's face, trapped in a moment where innocence had long been forsaken.

Kai yearned to scream, to break free from the invisible grip that held him prisoner. However, the very sight of James — haunted, triumphant, and twisted — stole away his voice, leaving him to wrestle with the chilling specter of everything they had once shared now turned to ashes. Kai worked against himself to build the strength to penetrate his anger through the cage and at James.

Kai
You fucking backstabber!

James
I sure am! Hahaaaaa! You should have visited the future more! You would have seen this coming!

Kai banged on the lucid structure again like a madman. His face was red, and the bifurcated vein in the middle of his forehead bulged out.

Kai
Why are you doing this, James?

James
Not long after Oolra extracted the codes from you, she came to me with a proposal.

Kai shook his head in disbelief.

Kai

What kind of proposal?

James

She traveled to the future and saw what the most likely outcomes would be. That gave her an advantage in this war for survival. However, in the event that you outsmarted her, she came up with a backup plan.

Kai pointed his finger at his captor.

Kai

You're the "other" that Oolra was referring to.

James

I am one of the "others." There are those with longer-term goals that are above me.

Kai

Why would you take her seriously?

James

I didn't take her seriously at first. I had my doubts about you, but not to the point of becoming your nemesis. It wasn't until you gave that reality-changing speech to the world that I realized you were always the threat I initially saw you as.

Kai

I'm not your enemy, James.

James

I wanted to believe that, too. I really did. But at the end of the day, I don't want to live in a communist Jew-hating dystopia. That's what you've created.

Kai

People are working together rather than against each other. How is that a dystopia?

James

They always work together during the honeymoon phase. I fear what happens to them when time is allowed to unfold.

Kai

At least it's fair and balanced. Shit can happen whether you control everyone or they control themselves. I would much rather live in a world where we deserve to live, even if it does not work out for long. That's the gamble of life.

James

No. See, that is where you're wrong. Even with the abundance of resources for basic needs, there will always be people who want more than others to feel special because they are empty shells. That is why God chose the Jewish people to guide them towards the light. He gave us the Torah to fill those empty vessels with purpose, and I will be damned to let a self-hating Jew like you get in the way of bringing about the messianic times.

Kai

God wouldn't have given us free will if he weren't looking for something real. If we chose to work together rather than against each other, we would unlock our godly potential.

James

You have too much faith in humans. Just look back at our own history every time we thought we had it good — the Inquisition, the Pogroms, the Holocaust, and now October 7th. What makes you think now will be any different?

Silence filled the room for a long moment.

Kai

Wait, wait, wait, let's back up for a moment. Did she give you your powers before or after her death?

James

After.

Kai

How?

James

She gave me a piggyback device that would power me through your antiparticles. She knew I wouldn't initially take it, so she implanted it in a place and time that would have the highest probability of intersecting with my worldline when I was ready to accept her offer.

Kai

What broke you?

James

The straw that broke the camel's back? The day your new world turned mine upside down. It wasn't enough that you gave Israel to the non-Jews. You had to kill any remnant left of our good name by calling the day you captured our people's greatest heroes "Humanity Day." Now, our people live in the underworld because of you!

Kai

So you decided to be the messiah of the underworld. And what does Oolra get out of it?

James

The binary system you and I now power together is being siphoned to create an alternative timeline from which they have been resurrected.

Kai

You can't trust her, James.

James

I thought about that, you see. However, my piggybacking is the reason for their resurrection. They can't exist without me.

Kai

Look who's playing God now.

James

That is the difference between you and me. I work for God, and you play God.

Kai

I thought we were friends, James!

James

We still are. I need you to fuel my abilities to run this world. Without you, I'm nothing!

Kai

You're a parasite!

James smiled, and then winked as Kai screamed at the top of his lungs.

James

Dinner will be ready shortly, Kapo.

Kai seared his eyes into James' soul before James dissolved into the ether and shut the lights off on Kai, who continued to rage against the darkness.

To be continued… Stay tuned for version 2 next…